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"The Way to Become a Man": The Influence of Commercial Sex on Male Psychosocial Development

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“THE WAY TO BECOME A MAN”: THE INFLUENCE OF COMMERCIAL SEX ON MALE
PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Antioch University Seattle
Seattle, WA

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements of the Degree
Doctor of Psychology

By

Adrian Garcia

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“THE WAY TO BECOME A MAN”: THE INFLUENCE OF COMMERCIAL SEX ON MALE
PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

This dissertation, by Adrian Garcia, has
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who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of the
Antioch University Seattle at Seattle, WA in partial fulfillment of
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

“THE WAY TO BECOME A MAN”: THE INFLUENCE OF COMMERCIAL SEX ON MALE PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Hegemonic masculinity and the negative consequences that it has on men and women continues to gain increasing attention in research and in popular culture. Particular attention is paid to the sexual violence that is perpetrated by men towards women, however, the research on men's sexual development and its relationship to this sexual violence focuses largely on biological explanations. The feminist literature, however, on sexual violence offers a differing perspective, which includes the socialization processes that men undergo in their sexual development that lead them towards normalizing sexual violence. One of these processes is the existence and normalization of the commercial sex industry. This study interviewed 12 participants, eight via individual interviews and four in a focus group, to ascertain the relationship between men's sexual development and their engagement with the commercial sex industry. The findings within this study suggested a strong link between men's sexual development, pornography, prostitution, and fitting in with all-male peer groups. Commercial sex served as a vehicle for participants to express their masculine identities and bond with peers over sexual topics. Literature and exploration on hegemonic masculinity may benefit from further analysis on how men's sexual development, including their enactment or understanding of sexual violence, is interwoven into their experiences of commercial sex. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA, <http://aura.antioch.edu/> and Ohio Link ETD Center <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/etd>.

Keywords: Hegemonic Masculinity, Pornography, Prostitution, Sex Buyers, Feminist Research, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my Gigi, who passed away halfway through my writing process. I have faith that she would be so proud of me for completing this dissertation and persevering until the bitter end.

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Hegemonic masculinity is a term utilized to describe the present zeitgeist that exists in which power structures are maintained that facilitate the socialization of both genders in which men maintain power over women. Within the analysis on hegemonic masculinity, research has begun to be disseminated in regard to the ill effects hegemonic masculinity has on men, as well as the detrimental and disastrous effects that it has on women. An important part of this conversation is in regard to the commercial sex industry, and the way it intersects with sexual violence that is perpetrated towards women on a regular basis. However, the manner in which these processes are embedded within the men's sexuality and their psyche is ill-explored when it comes to research on men, despite the numerous theories and important contributions that have been made thus far.

The manner in which masculinity occurs is attributed to multiple factors including patriarchal socialization, evolutionarily determined mechanisms, and extraneous environmental factors. Theorists often argue for conceptualizations that either support the ideology of a biologically determined masculinity or promote a sociological examination of power and patriarchal systems of oppression. Both the patriarchal analysis, as well as the evolutionary theories, fail to deconstruct men's own personal experiences of their gender (hooks, 2004). The lack of deconstruction from a male perspective serves to elucidate the manner in which the male gender remains invisible within research studying male attitudes toward their experience of gender.

There is a growing body of literature on men's health in connection to patriarchy; this research elucidates the socialization for all people who identify under the category of "male" and how this socialization is intimately connected to their sexual practices and the violence men enact toward other men, children, and women.

The aims of the present research are focused specifically on the socialization of male sexuality as it pertains to men's engagement within the commercial sex industry. This specificity of focus is due to three factors: there is a lack of research that deconstructs masculinity as it pertains to purchasing sex; the commercial sex industry provides a legitimate target group for heterosexual men and society as a whole; and the commercial sex industry reflects the social ideology of men's entitlement to sex and power (Baldwin, 1992). The use of the term "legitimate target group" signifies the permissibility of men's sexuality, regardless of its degree of violence, by social standards and legal practices (Baldwin, 1992). Furthermore, the terms "male sexuality" and "masculinity" are utilized within this study as descriptors for the socialization process that influences male sexual expression. According to Kimmel (2010), masculinity and male sexuality are socially constructed phenomena and are shaped through practices such as misogyny, heteronormativity, homophobia, and patriarchy. The deconstruction of masculinity and male sexuality into these component parts should include the phenomenon of men purchasing sex in order to capture the full picture of hegemonic masculinity.

The argument is supported through an exploration of the reification of a biological masculinity within psychological literature and how this practice is problematic through excusing violent behavior within social and legal systems. Counterarguments to a biological masculinity are presented to give support to the socially constructed view of masculinity described within feminist and sociological research. Men's engagement with commercial sex is explored, with an emphasis on how sexual violence intersects into the multiple aspects of men's engagement with prostitution. Finally, men's views of their engagement within the commercial sex industry are, as the research within this field continues to be controversial. The purpose of this research is to explore men's sexuality from a holistic model that includes men's views of

how their sexuality was shaped and how this has affected their life in general. This process of deconstructing masculinity and focusing on how it pertains to commercial sex specifically will offer insight into two topics previously missing from the literature: why men purchase sex and description of men's overall sexual development.

This research study pulls from the oeuvre of feminist scholars such as Dworkin, Farley, Stoltenberg, Baldwin, and McKinnon. From the perspective of these authors, sexual identity and gender are constructed simultaneously within our society, emphasizing the need to critique sexualized and gendered practices simultaneously. The overlap between the constructs of sexuality and gender can be seen within Dworkin's (1993) arguments; for instance, she contends that the proliferation of pornography has facilitated problematic gender dynamics whilst hiding its oppressive force through emphasizing an individualistic perspective of "sexual liberation." An important distinction to note within feminist literature, and the feminist movement in general, are the multiple philosophical perspectives that underlie a movement that is categorized under a singular term. The historical arc of feminism is described in "waves," however, the distinction between feminist literature examined within this study, and the feminist views that disagree with this perspective are informed by the manner in which certain sociological understandings promote individualistic rights over socially embedded practices.

Defining Masculinity

Historically, understandings of masculinity and male sexuality have been limited due to the practice of seeing the heteronormative-White-male gender, and consequently male sexual practices, as normal (Hearn, 2004). Research and academic writing on sexuality, psychology, and sociology were historically written from the male perspective, with particular attention being paid to perceived problems with women and sexual minorities (Hearn, 2004). Male behavior and

masculinity were thus not directly described, but rather were inferred in the pathologizing and describing non-masculine behavior or perceived problems in women. In response to this historical way of writing, feminism offered methodologies which refocus the research process to include examinations of masculinity and patriarchy. The epistemological practice of deconstructing masculinity in order to study men's lived experience facilitates bringing forward the important socio-cultural factors that influence men and make visible what was previously being ignored or minimized in the writing (Kimmel, 2005; Philaretou & Allen, 2001).

Hegemonic masculinity. Studying the manner in which socio-cultural forces function to keep men in positions of power facilitates the process of making men's lived experience visible within research and academic writing. Hegemonic masculinity is a term utilized by researchers endeavoring to make patriarchal systems and practices tangible and visible (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). The study of hegemonic masculinity focuses on the previously described practice of deconstructing masculinity, and more importantly, in naming the manner in which power is produced and maintained by individuals and systems in society.

According to Hearn (2004), hegemony is the social constructionist idea that a particular group determines the cultural and social norms and understandings for the rest of the population. Hegemony, within the examination of masculinity, includes the manner in which patriarchal forces are centralized as social norms by dominant groups within society. Hegemonic masculinity is described as a set of "prescriptive social norms" that shape the larger systems in which individuals interact and make meaning of their lives (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Sections of society that have access to power can utilize their economic and political status in order to shape these social norms regarding the expression of masculinity, and, in turn, suppress women and particular groups of men.

Another aspect of hegemony is that overt and covert forces are utilized in order to obtain “active consent” from oppressed and disempowered groups (Hearn, 2004, p. 60). The phrase active consent captures the phenomenon in which groups that are not benefited by social practices continue to follow those practices due to social pressures and norms. According to Hearn (2004), active consent also includes the process of disempowered groups integrating belief systems propagated by “collective political actors” such as government officials, the economic elite, and academics. These belief systems, which are disseminated through various sources and are consumed by the disempowered, shape the manner in which events are understood, discussed, and ultimately addressed (2009).

This type of active consent process is exemplified by media and news portrayal of gun violence as a genderless phenomenon (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). Kimmel and Mahler found that in news reports of gun violence in schools, the gender and race of the shooters (largely White, rural boys), were left out as part of the overall report. According to the researchers, the lack of attention to key common factors (i.e., being bullied with homophobic slurs and having a desire to prove their masculinity) facilitated a dialogue that ignored toxic masculinity. They argue that this reporting functioned as a covert force to promote the continued belief in an inherent and biologically determined violent masculinity (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). The public was thus expected to continue in the belief that masculinity was a non-issue and focus instead on issues such as mental health, gun control, and video game culture (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003).

Hegemonic masculinity gives a scaffold for research and writing in which the goal is to deconstruct masculinity and identify the component pieces and name the forces that were previously invisible. Hegemonic masculinity does not describe the experience of individual men’s processes in negotiating their gender on a daily basis (Wetherell & Edley, 1999); rather, it

functions to examine the forces that work toward limiting and defining the experience of men as a whole (Hearn, 2004). Aims for deconstructing masculinity point towards examining systems and institutions such as churches, media, government, the military, and the commercial sex industry as having specific economic and social gains from maintaining patriarchal values and norms. In describing male behavior, it is important to consider the social norms that are promoted by larger systems rather than taking the individual behavior at face value. Within this research enterprise, male sexuality is examined with particular attention to commercial sex as a system.

Describing male sexuality. Examinations of men and masculinity within the field of psychology often intersect with men's sexual experiences and behavior and is, therefore, a useful piece of masculinity to deconstruct and examine in more detail. Within this body of research, biological explanations are often favored over socio-cultural understandings. The epistemological assumptions within the research are that male sexuality is largely biologically driven, making invisible the cultural and social factors that construct the psychological practices of men (Kimmel, 2005; Monterosso, Royzman, & Schwartz, 2005). This focus on biological determinism, or the idea that behavior is driven by biological forces, has important implications in how we understand and interpret male sexual behavior and masculinity in general (Alper, 1995; Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Dar-Nimrod, Heine, Cheung, & Schaller, 2011). Masculinity, understood as biologically determined and free of context, has drastically different implications than when it is considered in the social context in which it arises (Kimmel, 2005).

In contrast, feminist research methodologies of male sexuality and masculinity facilitate a dialogue that elucidates the social variables and cultural practices that help shape sexual practices in society (Hearn, 2004; Kimmel, 2005; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Feminist dialogues,

including discussions of hegemonic masculinity, centralize the role of power in the construction of gender, and the reification of gender models that benefit specific groups (Hearn, 2004). From this perspective, men are studied in order to understand how their context and these sociocultural forces act on them in order to privilege and suppress particular behaviors. In describing masculinity, these differences in epistemology must be considered in order to thoughtfully navigate the existing literature and how it portrays male sexuality and what is considered normative male behavior.

Examples of problematic research on male sexuality. Two implicit assumptions regarding masculinity are of particular interest: men are inclined to have multiple partners, and men are naturally prone to rape (Buss, 2008; Smiler, 2013). These psychological understandings of masculinity simultaneously support and are supported by Western socio-cultural practices and have the common thread that they offer individualistic rationales for sexual violence (Buss, 2008; Smiler, 2013).

The first assumption is that men are naturally inclined to have multiple partners. This argument is supported in evolutionary psychology through the use of research and examples from the animal kingdom, which shows greater evolutionary success for males capable of maintaining multiple female partners (Buss, 2008). Evolutionary success is defined as the ability to transfer one's genes into future generations, with greater amounts of gene transmission equaling greater success (Brase, Adair, & Monk, 2014). These theories give empirical support to the social concept of the "Casanova," or the man capable and desirous of having as many sexual conquests as possible throughout the lifetime (Smiler, 2013). Within this ideology is the concurrent idea that women do not benefit similarly, as they are *naturally* burdened with the task of caring for the newborn child (Buss, 2008). Furthermore, women are guaranteed knowledge of

their relatedness to their offspring and men are not, which warrants male promiscuity to increase their odds that they will sire a child (Brase et al., 2014). These arguments thus give support to the idea that the emphasis on multiple partners, for heteronormative masculinity, is largely based on biological and evolutionary mechanisms.

The argument that men have a propensity toward multiple relationships may be best contrasted against literature on male sexual behavior. According to Smiler (2013), male sexual behavior does not resemble the masculinity described in evolutionary psychology; rather, men report engaging with a small number of partners over many years. Furthermore, Smiler cited studies in which a majority of men reported goals of having monogamous long-term partnerships, which refutes Buss' (2008) prior theoretical claims that most men desire multiple partners. Furthermore, the data on sexual behavior supports the notion that men are engaging in monogamous relationships, with the average number of sexual relationships correlating strongly with the number of long term relationships (Smiler, 2013). Thus, the argument put forward by evolutionary psychology is not reflective of male experiences, but rather of social stereotypes that center on a biologically-driven masculinity.

The second assumption is that men are naturally prone to rape. This argument is met with higher levels of controversy. Evolutionary psychology continues to support the notion that males in many species will resort to rape as a method for ensuring their evolutionary success (Buss, 2008). According to Miller (2013), men who do not have access to resources due to poverty are less likely to be able to attract a partner, and are more likely to rape as an instinctual response to ensuring the continuation of their genes. Similarly, Buss (2008) argued that men who have been rejected by women historically and have “experienced deprivation of sexual access to women will be more likely to use sexually aggressive tactics” (p. 333). Additionally,

Buss (2008) argued that women have evolved “anti-rape adaptations” including the propensity toward being traumatized by the incident, sexual selection for large male partners for protection, and the avoidance of risky behaviors during times of fertility. These arguments support the heteronormative ideology wherein men are naturally propelled to rape, and women are naturally responsible for defending themselves against these violent acts.

Despite the strong support for this argument within evolutionary psychology, many cultural and sociological factors have been highlighted as relevant to the argument by researchers in the field (Zurbriggen, 2010). For example, Miller (2013) presented the following characteristics of men who rape:

endorsement of traditional male–female sex roles, hostile or competitive attitudes toward women, endorsement of a variety of *rape myths* (e.g. “No means yes;” “They all really want it”), acceptance of the use of violence towards women, higher masculinity scores on psychometric assessment instruments, earlier age of first sexual experience, greater number of sexual experiences, and low satisfaction with conventional sexual experiences. (p. 69)

Evolutionary psychology proposes that these social factors are important due to the men’s lowered capacity for relationship acquisition. However, this does not account for the cases of marital rape, which were found to occur in 9% of women in one study (Miller, 2013). Neither does it account for the high prevalence of rape during times of war or the high levels of rape between incarcerated men. Hegemonic masculinity underlies both rape and war, and is connected to higher rates of rape within societies and cultures that promote the violence of men and the subjugation of women (Zurbriggen, 2010).

By analyzing the trends in the research on male sexuality, one can identify the manner in which certain modes of thinking are giving preferential treatment and espoused as objective findings. Evolutionary psychology serves as a model for how biological determinism can be promoted within research despite substantial existing evidence to the contrary. Research focused

on men's lived experience, within the socio-cultural context in which their gender and sexuality are expressed, offers deeper insights into men's lives and their behaviors (Smiler, 2013). The process of deconstructing masculinity within the research further serves to elucidate the nuances of men's lives, and make visible the manner in which patriarchal norms and values are embedded in scientific writing.

Masculinity and Commercial Sex

Whitehead (2005) described masculinity as a “dynamic factor” relating to violence in our society. Gender roles, and specifically patriarchal values and norms, influence the manner in which intimate partner violence and sexual violence is perpetrated by men (Kelly, 1988; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013). According to S. G. Smith et al. (2017) in a report for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States, the prevalence of intimate partner violence amongst women in their lifetime was 37.3%, and sexual violence prevalence was 36.3%, and 19.1% of the women reported having been raped in their lifetime. These statistics are important to understand, as male sexuality develops within this context of violence towards women, and is influenced by the unfolding power dynamics that benefit and privilege men (hooks, 2004; Kelly, 1988; Koskela & Tani, 2005). Relational and sexual violence are important factors to examine when deconstructing men's experiences as a whole in order to understand hegemonic masculinity.

Sexual violence towards women, which occurs along a continuum, is the foundation for hegemonic masculinity. Kelly (1988) defined sexual violence as:

any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact. (p. 41)

Kelly's (1988) seminal research supported the idea that sexual violence occurs along a continuum of violent acts, from catcalls to rape. All levels of sexual violence served to reinforce

a framework in which women were made to fear for their bodily safety on a regular basis, as they were experienced by women as interconnected. Kelly's data showed that a catcall and street harassment were threatening due to their connection to the higher levels of violence, and thus, served to reinforce a fear of bodily harm. Feminists describe the purpose of the sexual violence continuum as central to maintaining hegemonic masculinity, as all forms of sexual violence serve to reinforce men's ability to harm women (Phoenix, 2011). Hegemonic masculinity can be understood as a driving force in the violence and sexual violence that occurs socially. Men's lived experiences of their personal sex practices, including sex buying, may offer insight into the interrelationship between hegemonic masculinity, sex, and sexual violence.

Issues in the literature on sex buying. The issues of morality and legality are highly salient topics when examining the literature on the commercial sex industry and men's sex buying practices. According to Baldwin (1998), the root of the controversy within the topic of commercial sex lies in the existence of two ideological camps: sex as work and prostitution as sexual exploitation. These vastly different approaches to studying prostitution serve to shape the research on violence within prostitution and frame the interpretations when it comes to men's experiences and motivations for purchasing sex (Farley et al., 2011; Sanders, 2008; Weitzer, 2014).

From the ideological stance of sex as work, authors generally describe men's experiences as being driven by biological and inevitable urges (Ismail, Martens, Landau, Greenberg, & Weise, 2012; MacKinnon, 2009). From this perspective, men purchasing sex is an inevitable part of life and the consequent violence that occurs to women and children in prostitution is a byproduct of society's morally conservative approach to sex. From the stance of prostitution as exploitation, patriarchal social norms, and men's use of power and violence are at the root of the

existence of prostitution (Baldwin, 1992; Farley et al., 2011; MacKinnon 2009). This ideological group believes that the violence within prostitution is directly related to men's demand for prostitution, as their willingness to pay for sex facilitates a system which exploits oppressed groups and ignores the violence incurred upon them. These divided camps are further divided by the logistics of laws and policies that emanate from them.

Complete decriminalization and criminalization of sex buyers are the two approaches argued within the two ideological camps. The authors and researchers that promote the idea of prostitution as sex work argue that decriminalization would improve the capacity for sex workers to unionize, to reduce stigma, and to reduce the harms and dangers of sex work (Z. K. Jones, 2013; Sanders, 2008; Wurster, 2013). Their arguments are based on promoting individual women's rights to make decisions regarding their own body (Sanders, 2008). These arguments are also a push towards sex-positivity, and are a push against the Judeo-Christian morality imposed on women and sexual minorities within Western cultures (Sanders, 2008).

The other legal strategy is the Nordic Model, which criminalizes sex buying and decriminalizes the selling of sex. Aims within this legal strategy are to view prostituted people as groups needing protection, thereby decriminalizing them and focusing instead on the men that drive the markets which facilitate the sexual abuses of disempowered groups (Raymond, 2004). This strategy is born from government efforts for gender equality and as a response to the lack of success seen in reducing sex trafficking when decriminalization or legalization is implemented (European Women's Lobby, 2011). In a government analysis done in the Netherlands, where prostitution was legalized and where legal protections were offered to women in prostitution, the study found that 50 to 90 % of women were trafficked, and that this amounted to roughly 4,000 victims of human trafficking per year in Amsterdam (European Women's Lobby, 2011).

Legalization and decriminalization are historically argued against due to the lack of efficacy demonstrated in some studies.

The multiple stances and ideologies that drive the literature are important to consider as they necessarily shape the methodologies and the interpretive methods utilized in researching men's sexualities in the context of the commercial sex industry. In an article from Weitzer (2005), the author argued that research on prostitution contained many ideological blinders that obfuscated the data and that interpretations were often swayed to either extreme of the ideological argument rather than focusing on the data at hand. It is difficult to discuss men's engagement with commercial sex without addressing this ideological divide, as these arguments are the driving force behind many of the articles published regarding the matter (MacKinnon, 2009). These ideological stances will be viewed as limitations by either camp, however, it is beneficial for the researchers to initially frame their positionality within this context in order to contribute to the growing discussion on men's sexual development.

The researchers within this investigation will aim to discuss the literature and findings as fairly as possible, however it should be noted that the original researcher supports the Nordic Model with its emphasis on lowering demand and criminalizing sex buying. More information regarding the personal beliefs and experiences of the researcher may be found in the foregrounding section below.

Commercial sex and sexual violence. The connection between sexual violence and hegemonic masculinity is best captured by a quote from Evelina Giobbe (1987, as cited in Baldwin, 1992): "Prostitution isn't like anything else. Rather, everything else is like prostitution because it is the model for women's condition." This quote was in reference to the high levels of violence that occur within prostitution. In a study by Farley, Baral, Kiremire, and Sezgin (1998),

475 participants in prostitution from five different countries were interviewed. The researchers found that on average, 62% of respondents reported having been raped in prostitution, with 46% reporting they had been raped more than five times. In another study by Raphael and Shapiro (2002), researchers studied women in street prostitution in Chicago and found that 86% of their participants reported having been physically assaulted. These levels of violence are staggeringly high when compared to women in the general population. Within the context of the sexual violence continuum, these levels of sexual violence influence the experiences of women in general.

According to Farley, Bindel, and Golding (2009), violence perpetrated upon women and children within the system of prostitution is emblematic of the sexual violence committed against all women, as many acts of violence, oppression, and coercion are employed to maintain the cycle of exploitation and objectification that constitutes the commercial sex industry. Within the framework of the sexual violence continuum, if a group of women are targeted for higher levels of violence it will have an inevitable effect on all women; acts of sexual violence serve to demarcate the social hierarchies and remind women of the lack of bodily safety that exists for them in society. Examples of this ripple effect of violence is demonstrated within research, as higher levels of violence aimed towards women in prostitution also affect women in the general population (Baldwin, 1992; Farley, 2004; Koskela & Tani, 2005; MacKinnon, 2009).

In areas where prostitution is present, higher levels of violence towards women have been reported. For example; Koskela and Tani (2005) found that sexual harassment in the city of Helsinki in Finland were as high as 69% within the red-light district, which was significantly higher than in other areas of the city. Moreover, 52% of the women in the red-light district reported that it was perceived to be related to prostitution, and gave examples of men alluding to

prostitution and sex buying as part of the harassment. The researchers concluded that street harassment was “quite aggravated” in red light districts compared to other parts of the city, stating that “harassment could happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime, and hence was very difficult to avoid, especially for those living in the area” (Koskela & Tani, 2005, p. 421). The existence of a legitimate target group, women in prostitution, was connected to an increase in the sexual harassment for all women in areas containing legitimized prostitution.

Prostitution is also associated with crimes against women in the general population through examining men’s stated motives around sexual violence and interpersonal violence. According to Baldwin (1992), “the characterization of women as ‘sluts’ by assaultive men runs like a sturdy thread through women’s accounts of sexual victimization.” Baldwin cites multiple court cases in which men utilize epithets referring to prostitution as justification for the crimes committed against the women. Further evidence of this connection is shown through studies on survivors of incest and domestic violence, as terminology regarding feeling like a “slut” due to the abuse, or being referenced as a slut by the abuser, can be found within victims’ accounts (Baldwin, 1992; O’Neil & Harway, 1997). The sexual violence continuum thus has a deep relationship with commercial sex, as men perpetrate higher levels of violence towards women in prostitution and associate victims of violence with prostituted women.

Prostitution is a legitimate target group for the overt expression of the violence and power dynamics inherent in hegemonic masculinity. This may be seen in the belief that men are in need, or are entitled to, a legitimate target group for their “sexual impulses” otherwise they may be expressed as violence towards the general population of women. It is a connection that has a long tradition; for example, in a book written in 1969 on crime and control, Morris and Hawkins (1969) argued the need for prostitution, stating “prostitution provides an outlet for sexual

impulses which might otherwise be expressed in rape or other kinds of sexual crimes.” (p. 21).

As discussed in the previous section, these popular notions regarding masculinity are not reflected in the research on men’s sexual behaviors (Smiler, 2013). Despite not being reflected in their sexual behavior, studies show that men continue to espouse this belief; one study showed that 32% of participants who were sex buyers and 20% of non-sex buying participants, believed prostitution prevented rape (Farley et al., 2011). These views of men’s sexuality are an expression of social norms and beliefs about male sexuality that are based in hegemonic masculinity, rather than in actual sexual behaviors.

Comparing sex buyers to non-sex buyers. The present literature that examines masculinity in relation to sex buying has several branches, with one important one being attempts to determine whether or not sex buyers are “your next-door neighbor” or if they are pathological and different from most men (Monto & Milrod, 2013). Some studies focused on the differences between men who purchase sex and men who do not, but there have also been comparisons of types of sex buyers that engage in different parts of the commercial sex industry. The data from these multiple studies supports the idea that, in fact, sex buyers as a whole differ from the general population of men that do not purchase sex. There are, however, some segments of the sex buying population that differ more drastically than others (Farley et al., 2017; Monto & McRee, 2005; Monto & Milrod, 2013).

Researchers note significant differences when comparing sex buyers to non-sex buyers. In a study by Farley et al. (2017), researchers compared 101 sex buyers with 100 non-sex buyers in a large mixed methods study. Results showed that non-sex buyers were more likely to have criminal histories and to disclose violent crimes committed against women. Sex buyers were more likely to have received their sexual education from pornography, were more likely to use

pornography to masturbate, and were more likely to try and recreate pornography with sex partners. Furthermore, sex buyers were more likely to overestimate the percentage of men who purchased sex in the general population, with 48% agreeing with the statement “most men go to prostitutes once in a while,” (Farley et al., 2017, p. 19). In comparison, 26% of non-sex buyers agreed with this statement.

A different study by Monto and McRee (2005) studied 1,672 men who were arrested for soliciting street prostitution and compared them to men in the general population. Results showed that men who purchased sex were less likely to be married than non-sex buyers, as well as being more likely to report being in unhappy marriages. Monto and McRee also found that sex buyers were more likely to have thoughts of sex, feel more guilt regarding sex, and were more likely to utilize other aspects of the sex industry including nude establishments and pornography. These group differences increased when men who were first-time buyers were taken out of the analysis, and men who purchased sex repeatedly were compared to the general population. The one exception was that first-time sex buyers were significantly more likely to report having had no sexual partners within the past year.

Several studies on male sex buyers have compared different groups of men who purchase sex, seeing them as a heterogeneous group. Within the Monto and McRee (2005) study, first-time sex buyers were seen as having significantly higher rates of no sexual contact, but were generally closer to the general population of men on other survey questions than were repeat sex buyers. Some researchers conclude that it is a smaller segment of the population of men, those that purchase sex regularly, that make up a bulk of the sex trade industry and are the driving force behind the demand for prostitution (Farley et al., 2017; Monto & Milrod, 2013; Sander, 2008). It

is suggested that these groups differ from the general population, rather than the men who occasionally purchase sex or venture into sex buying only once.

Monto and Milrod (2013) compared two groups of sex buyers: one group of men was defined as street sex buyers who were arrested during police stings and a second group of men who labeled themselves as hobbyists, a term for men who engage in online sex buying and are active on internet forums for sex buyers, and men who had been arrested during a street police sting. Hobbyists were more likely to earn higher wages, to believe that prostitution should be legalized, to believe that women who sold sex enjoyed their work, and to endorse the idea of marrying a woman who sold sex. Another significant difference was that approximately three percent of hobbyists answered that it was “wrong only sometimes” or “not wrong at all” for adults to have sex with children, whilst less than one percent of street sex buyers answered in that manner. The researchers stated that this finding may not be significant, suggesting that street sex buyers had police involvement occurring due to their previous actions and may not provide honest responses to the survey question.

There are also important similarities between sex buyers and non-sex buyers that have been found within the research. Farley et al. (2017) noted that both sex buyers and non-sex buyers had similar belief systems regarding rape myths. According to the researchers, 32% of sex buyers and 20% of non-sex buyers believed that rape was prevented by the existence of prostitution and scored similarly on assessments measuring rape myth acceptance. Monto and Hotaling (2001) found similar results, stating that rape myth acceptance was no more prevalent within sex buyers than within the normative population. Monto and Hotaling, however, also pointed out the manner in which men who were repeat sex buyers had higher rates of rape myth acceptance than first-time buyers and men who did not purchase sex.

In a study by Marttila (2008) on Finnish sex buyers, the author emphasized the manner in which sex buyers shared the common theme of being able to access women who had less financial security than them. Through factors such as privilege and globalization, men were able to access their sex buying fantasies and practices through finding women outside of their country that were in financially oppressed circumstances. Monto and Milrod (2013) also emphasized the importance of class dynamics in how men accessed sex, and that the men's class background affected the types of prostitution that they could access. Specifically, Monto and Milrod found that affluent online hobbyists could access the online markets of women who were able to afford an online persona and grant anonymity and safety to their clients. Men who purchased sex on the streets had higher rates of unemployment and lower incomes, and, in turn, accessed sex from women who were more economically disadvantaged and working in the more dangerous work of street prostitution (Monto & Milrod, 2013).

Motivations for purchasing sex. Researchers examining men and the commercial sex industry also focus on men's motivations for purchasing sex. The studies on men's motivations include qualitative interviews and large-scale surveys. The overall data presents multiple layers of men's reasoning for purchasing sex, as well as explorations into the reasons ascribed to men regarding why they may be purchasing sex. Within the research, men report purchasing sex for the following reasons: loneliness or emotional dissatisfaction, a desire for intimacy or a girlfriend experience, sexual urges, unsatisfactory sexual relationships, a desire for diverse sexual experiences, and pursuit of thrill or excitement (Farley et al. 2017; Hite, 1987; C. Jones, 2013; Milrod & Monto, 2012; Monto, 2000).

Sanders (2008) organized the overt motivations of men into what she termed pull and push factors. According to Sanders, push factors were aspects of men's lives that were lacking

while pull factors were aspects of the sex industry that men found enticing. The participants in Sanders' study shared that their unmet sexual and emotional needs contributed to their eventual pursuit of sex buying as a way of meeting those needs. These push factors varied from participant to participant, and also changed over the course of the participants' engagement with commercial sex. The rationales ranged from boredom, to a lack of intimacy in their personal life, to a desire to avoid the "rigmarole" of finding a female partner. Sanders then contended that pull factors were the aspects of the commercial sex industry that the men were lured by, including the desire to enact fantasies, the accessibility of "available" sex partners, and the "glitzy and gritty" images associated with commercial sex.

There are particular points of further research within men's motivations for purchasing sex that receive more attention than others due to the prevalence of these ideas within sex buyers. Within the literature, the issue of intimacy and seeking intimacy through sex buying has been addressed on multiple levels. Within these discussions, the "girlfriend experience" (Monto & Milrod, 2013; Sanders, 2008, p. 93) is commonly utilized by men and by women in commercial sex to describe this particular type of experience. Another important topic is men's motivation to purchase sex due to mental health or disability issues that they are contending with. The final aspect that also receives particular attention is men's motivations when it comes to dominance and the pursuit of violence.

Intimacy and the girlfriend experience. In many studies of men who purchase sex, men's difficulties in their marriage, a desire for intimacy, or their loneliness and a desire for sexual connection are named as important motivators for turning to commercial sex (Hite, 1987; Milrod & Monto, 2012, 2017; Sanders, 2008). In a qualitative study by Z. K. Jones (2013), 14 men who participated in online communities of sex buyers reported specific forms of intimacy

that they sought through sex buying. Results showed that emotional intimacy, such as having in depth discussions about their personal lives, were as important to some of the men as the sexual encounters. Other men expressed that the physical intimacy of touch and cuddling were also important to their motivations for purchasing sex. Within the intimacy expressed by buyers, the underlying verbiage described as part of the community was the Girlfriend Experience (GFE).

As one of the participants in Sanders' (2008) study expressed, the GFE was an experience in which "you've had sex and it hasn't felt like a paid encounter" (p. 93). The intimacy described by the sex buyers had elements of what Sanders' termed "authentic delusion of mutuality," "authentic-fake delusion of mutuality," and "genuine mutuality." For Sanders (2008), though there was no true mutuality within many narratives of paid sex, the shared understanding of this delusion created a sense of authenticity for the men. The payment of women to enact these fantasies was seen by Sanders as an "authentic-fake delusion of mutuality" in which both parties were privy to the acting and role-playing, and understood it to be specifically for the man's pleasure. However, sex buyers contend that some of the intimacy is, in fact, genuine, though it can be difficult to ascertain (Z. K. Jones, 2013; Sanders, 2008). Intimacy within sex buying is complicated by the nature of sex buying as payment for the enactment of a fantasy that is being sought out and paid for, which includes the illusion of intimacy.

Disability and mental health. Research on sex buyers demonstrates the manner in which issues of disability and mental health concerns are highlighted as reasons for purchasing sex. In fact, there is a growing body of literature that describes men's reasoning for buying sex as being intimately connected with what is termed as "sexual rights" (Liddiard, 2014). Sexual rights advocates, which include some government organizations in the United Kingdom (UK), have compiled arguments regarding the need for prostitution to be legalized and legitimized in order

to protect the rights of disabled men to access sexual pleasure (C. Jones, 2013). As stated by Liddiard (2014), sexual pleasure is seen as a human right, and therefore “disabled people’s (and others) calls for access to commercial sex” are seen as “an embodiment of sexual rights to expression and pleasure” (p. 839). Despite claims towards sexual rights, Liddiard’s (2014) qualitative study on disabled men in the UK found that “male biological sex drive” (p. 845) narratives were rare within her participants. Rather, the men with disabilities mirrored their non-disabled sex buying counterparts and expressed motivations similar to those described above.

Other authors argue the utility of sex buying in meeting the relational and mental health needs of sex buyers (Z. K. Jones, 2013; Sanders, 2008). According to Z. K. Jones (2013), “there was a clear and influential link between pursuing paid sex and attempting to mitigate physical, sexual, and or/mental health problems” (p. 58). She goes on to claim that this helps support the notion that prostitution is parallel to other professions that contend with these issues. Sanders, (2008) also supported this argument by claiming the therapeutic value within sexual relationships, such as those found in prostitution. It should be noted also that clinical mental health work and other therapeutic practices do not suffer from the same oppressive forces as prostitution. The inherent forces that abound within prostitution, such as trafficking and forced sexual encounters, are present because of the gendered power dynamics that exist in the commodification of women’s bodies and the capitalist patriarchal forces that facilitate the buying and trading of women and children (Baldwin, 1992). Although the claims to the therapeutic value of sexual exploration are a growing argument in the literature, there should be some caution in promoting these assumptions without a deeper analysis of the oppression and violence suffered by people in prostitution.

Power and violence as motivators. The power to perpetrate violence towards women in prostitution is one reason men purchase sex, as documented within the literature (Baldwin 1992; Farley et al., 2017). However, in studies regarding why men purchase sex, desires to enact violent behavior are not regarded as salient or labeled as important aspects of this behavior (Busch, Bell, Hotaling, & Monto 2002; Monto & Milrod, 2013; Weitzer, 2005). In one study, the numbers were as low as one percent of men who reported having threatened physical violence or behaved violently to gain sex (Busch et al., 2002). In other studies, only a small fragment of sex buyers endorsed having purchased sex for the purposes of enacting violence. Men also do not endorse high levels of intimate partner violence or past sexual violence behaviors (Weitzer, 2005).

Difficulties in studying violence. Research on male violence, particularly toward women, has historically had to account for the fact that male perpetrators of violence against women do not interpret their behavior as violent or impactful (Naraine, 1996; Scott & Straus, 2007; Yun & Vonk, 2011). Research shows high levels of denial, minimization, and blaming when gathering data on intimate partner violence (Yun & Vonk, 2011). More specifically, some research shows that men are less likely to agree with or report similarly to the violence reported by the female targets of that violence (Naraine, 1996). Studying men's violence against prostituted women is affected by similar issues as intimate partner violence, as denial, minimization, and blame are integral aspects of the sociological and psychological factors that underlie violence towards women in prostitution (Baldwin, 1992; Farley 2017; MacKinnon 2009).

Rates of violence within the world of prostitution are variable across the literature, ranging from as low as 14% of women reported having been physically harmed, to as high as

86% (Weitzer, 2005). According to Weitzer's (2005) analysis of the research, certain sectors of prostitution have more protections and privileges, including indoor prostitution, with outdoor prostitution having the highest rates of violence and abuse. The violence that is perpetrated towards women in prostitution does not solely occur at the hands of buyers, but also at the hands of pimps and significant people in their lives (Raphael & Shapiro, 2002). Reports and rates of violence by women in prostitution thus varies depending on the definitions and methods used to gather the data. Within the research, however, buyers are implicated in all the violence that occurs towards women due to the demand for commercial sex creating incentive for the victimization of women and children (Baldwin, 1992).

According to one study by Farley et al. (2017), 33% of the sex buyers endorsed that prostitution had very or extremely negative effects on women in the life. In another study by Monto and Milrod (2013), approximately 73% of sex buyers who had been arrested for purchasing sex on the street stated that they strongly or somewhat disagreed with the idea that prostitutes enjoyed their work. Although the latter statistic does not speak to violence directly, it can be inferred that a significant portion of men who purchase sex understand the violence or coercion that is inherent in prostitution and engage in it despite these understandings. In understanding men's motivations for purchasing sex, their indirect desire to take part in a system that they understand to be violent or coercive should be taken into consideration for a fuller picture of the dynamics occurring for men.

Some authors, such as Busch et al. (2002), conjecture that the low levels of men's self-reported violence towards women are not contradictory to the data found on violence in prostitution. According to the authors, a small percentage of sex buyers could account for the high amounts of violence if they are repeat offenders. This may be supported by research done

by Monto and Hotaling (2001) in which they studied rape myth acceptance in 1,286 men who had been arrested for sex buying. The authors found that 70% of participants endorsed acceptance of at least one rape myth, however of the 20% that endorsed four or more rape myths, a significant portion of them had purchased sex more than once in the past year. Though it is important to continue considering the important statistics on men underreporting gender violence, this information regarding higher levels of sexual violence in repeat sex buyers offers an additional insight into male sex buying behavior.

Socio-cultural motivations. Researchers that study men's motivations for purchasing sex also point out the important relationship between sex buying and socio-cultural factors. One example of this type of research was a study that was done in Taiwan, in which participants were asked regarding their engagement with a specific form of the commercial sex industry known as flower drinking. In this study by Bedford and Hwang (2011), the researchers examined men who visited tea houses in which women were paid to engage in "sexual games" with customers ranging from touching and fondling all the way to intercourse. The participants reported that male bonding, a fear of losing employment, not having access to promotions, displaying wealth and power, and pleasure were all motivations for engaging in flower drinking.

Within the United States, studies of veterans also show that the context of particular forms of military involvement are related to higher rates of sex buying when compared to the general population (London & Wilmoth, 2015; Monto & Milrod, 2013). In a study by London and Wilmoth (2015), veterans were 3.1 times more likely to have paid for sex than the general population of men studied. Furthermore, the longer the participants served in the military, the higher the chances were of ever having paid for sex. Participants who served less than four years were measured at 16.98%, while chances were as high as 32.61% for those who served four or

more years. Researchers on sex buying practices amongst men rightfully argue that motivations for sex buying are integrally connected to the types of social contexts in which the men are exhibiting these behaviors, and that the context should be examined with as much emphasis as the men's internal motivations.

Study Significance

This research aims to examine male sexuality as a socially constructed phenomenon in which the commercial sex industry occupies an important role. Male sexual development is shaped by the commercial sex industry, as men's masculinity is interwoven into pornography, prostitution, and strip clubs. Taking these socio-cultural factors into account facilitates a deeper understanding of male sexuality than previous works that have focused primarily on biological factors. The aim is to understand how men's heteronormative sexual development occurs, and what their personal views are on how it was influenced by their direct interaction with commercial sex. Thus, the central point of investigation is the socially constructed notion of masculinity and male sexuality including their experiences with the commercial sex industry.

Research Question

This study explores the following question: what is the relationship between men's experiences of masculinity and the commercial sex industry? As described above, multiple studies examine men's overtly stated motivations regarding the purchasing of sex in order to understand this aspect of their sexual behavior. In contrast, this study takes a qualitative approach in hopes of drawing out their experiences with commercial sex as more than motivation, but as part of their overall sexual development. This study examines how men's sexuality develops within the socio-cultural context of a social milieu in which they had access

to purchasing sex. The study pays close attention to themes related to hegemonic masculinity, focusing on men's narratives of sex, relationships with women, power, and commercial sex.

Method

Qualitative methodologies are useful when researchers are attempting to explore meaning-making processes in individuals, or groups of individuals (Creswell, 2013). The process of gathering qualitative data facilitates locating themes within specific populations and allowing for a deeper exploration of participants' experiences from their perspective.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilized as the framework for gathering data and data analysis, as it aligned with the goals of the research. The purpose of this study was to examine a specific experience within a small population, and to elucidate the meanings and interpretations offered by the participants. IPA serves as a tool to examine the experience of men who have historically purchased sex and the meaning that they ascribe to their experiences in relation to their development as men.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is a preferable research design for the purposes of this study due to the focus on examining individuals' interpretations of their lived experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This analysis is helpful in taking an ideographic approach to research, wherein particular experiences and unique meanings can be explored without the impetus for broad generalizability (Smith et al., 2009). This depth is facilitated by the fact that ideographic approaches focus primarily on the experience of the individual and allow for a deeper analysis of personal meaning-making processes. A small number of participants are interviewed, and hermeneutic interpretation is utilized as the framework for the analysis.

Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a circular method of data analysis that has its traditions in 16th century practices of analyzing spiritual and ancient texts (Richardson & Fowers, 2010). The hermeneutic circle is the cornerstone for the methodology, as it posits that an understanding of a text requires an understanding of the “whole.” The whole represents the context in which the text was created, including culture, language, customs, and belief systems. The interpretation of the text within this larger context gives a fuller understanding of the text and its meanings. These new understandings will then invariably alter the understanding of the whole, as the process sheds light in a circular and iterative process (Stern, 2010). In IPA research, the texts are considered to be the interview transcripts, and they are analyzed with particular consideration for how they were derived, in what culture, in what context, and for what purpose.

The focus on setting a contextual foundation for the research participants aligns with the views within hermeneutic thought that human meaning is important in researching social processes. According to Richardson and Fowers (2010), there is a “profound and intimate kind of mutual influence, or co-constitution between the forces of history, culture, and society, on the one hand and psychological processes on the other” (p. 113). In studying psychology, or indeed any social science, this intricate relationship between influencing society and being influenced by society must be taken into careful consideration. The manner in which humans formulate meaning is an ever-changing process that fluctuates alongside the cultures and social influences that appear in their everyday lives. The circular nature of this meaning-making process is another example of the hermeneutic circle, and is another integral part of IPA.

Goals within hermeneutic frameworks are not to answer questions regarding universal understandings of human behavior, but rather, to understand and capture a particular phenomenon or experience. By focusing on the meaning-making process, IPA methodologies

focus on a hermeneutic approach to studying the “everyday flow” (Smith et al., 2009) of participants’ lives, and bringing to light the types of experiences that were meaningful and important to them. The hermeneutic circle is further emphasized by the understanding that the research interview is, in itself, a meaning-making process. Participants thus respond to interview questions through meaning-making that occurred prior to the interview, and that occurs in response to the interview itself.

To facilitate interviews that are open to this hermeneutic process, IPA utilizes interview schedules which offer a semi-structured approach to data gathering (Smith et al., 2009). Within this approach, questions are created to guide the researcher during the interview with the understanding that following the meaning-making process of the participant is of the utmost importance in gathering rich qualitative data. Preparing the questions also allows for researchers that are less experienced to practice a format of open-ended questioning while staying true to the aims of the research project. The hermeneutic nature of IPA facilitates modification of questions as the interviews progress, allowing researchers to be responsive to their participants and the meanings that they encounter (Smith et al., 2009). Modifying the interview allows for an “iterative” (Smith et al., 2009) process of interviewing which recognizes that meaning-making occurs both for the researcher and for the participant while the interviews progress.

Foregrounding. IPA takes into consideration the circular nature of interpretation, wherein the analysis of experience is shaped by prior understanding, and prior understandings are altered by gaining new insight into the analyzed experience (Smith et al., 2009). This conceptualization is helpful due to the focus on gender and heteronormativity in this study, as gendered understandings and assumptions are largely invisible and pervade a significant amount of our culture (Kimmel, 2005). In contextualizing myself as the researcher, my own gender and

sexual development play an important role in informing my interest on the topic, as well as my approach to the research. My personal journey into the subject of men and sex buying was initiated by my involvement in the Organization for Prostitution Survivors (OPS). The organization has two branches; one is dedicated to working with women seeking to exit the life within the commercial sex industry, the second is dedicated to working on men's accountability and decreasing various forms of gender-based violence including sex buying. The theoretical underpinnings of the work at OPS are that the commercial sex industry contributes to, and is an integral part of, the gender-based violence occurring within our society at large. It is important for me to acknowledge that this stance is seen with controversy amongst various sectors of academia and the commercial sex industry (Sanders, 2008). However, this is the theoretical positionality and understanding from which my research unfolded.

I have served as a volunteer and a facilitator on the men's side of the organization and have helped in the creation of the program, Stopping Sexual Exploitation: A Program for Men. Through this experience, I have listened to countless stories from men who were arrested for purchasing sex and have noted the meanings they ascribed to the relationship between their sex buying and their personal feelings around masculinity. No two men within the group had the exact same story; however, I noticed recurring themes between the participants and saw these themes within my own personal experience. The group offered me the unique opportunity to reflect on my sexual development that I had not previously had.

As a child, my adolescence was formed around the presence of the internet, and the beginning of the free internet porn phenomenon that has shaped the sexual lives of many men, including myself. I encountered online pornography as I began to explore my identity as a gay man. Encountering gay porn in the backdrop of a conservative Mexican-Catholic household was

a juxtaposition of enticing sexual exploration interwoven with debilitating shame and repression. When I finally began to open up about my sexuality, the gay communities in which I found myself celebrated sex, and the commercial sex industry along with it. Sex positivity and the importance of individual sexual expression was at the forefront of my new life, with online dating and pornography being two important spokes of the wheel.

As I began to study psychology and encountered feminist literature, I began to witness the debate that existed around the ethicality of porn, some of which existed outside of more common Christian moral stances. More specifically, I saw the literature on the effects of objectification on gender norms within society and grew curious about the psychological ramifications of porn on men. I wished to know more about how the commercial sex industry shaped the inner world of men, and how it molded the manner in which we relate to our sexual counterparts and understand our sexuality.

Male sexuality is a combination of biology, social pressures, and cultural understandings that coalesce to create sexual practices for individuals and societies at large (Hite, 1987; Ismail, et al., 2012; Smiler, 2013, Zurbriggen, 2010). Generally, only biology is emphasized within certain writings, including in certain parts of the psychological community. However, some scholars emphasize the manner in which sexual objectification has been utilized to promote financial gains despite its social ramifications (Hearn, 2004). Authors argue that there is danger in missing these capitalist forces, and that focusing on biological drivers when studying sex obfuscates the way in which sexuality and gender are constructed to maintain a system of privilege and oppression (Ismail et al., 2012; Smiler, 2013, Zurbriggen, 2010). I began to move away from simply celebrating sexuality as a biological need being met, and shifted to wanting to

understand why certain sexualities were celebrated and who stood to benefit, as well as the psychological consequences of these paradigms.

My identity differed from the participants in the study in that I have not purchased sex, and that all but one participant identified as straight, with one identifying as bisexual. I chose to study this population as I felt the men within the groups I had been a part of and facilitated offered insights into the relationship between the commercial sex industry and sex buying that would be difficult to find elsewhere. Aspects of the commercial sex industry are largely unquestioned within the social arrangement men find themselves in presently. However, prostitution is a controversial and often private matter, which makes sex buyers a unique population that may give us deeper information into the motives, pressures, and understandings that exist in the male psyche towards the commercial sex industry (Sanders, 2008).

I purposefully chose a research methodology that acknowledges my past experiences and understandings, including my culture, gender, and sexuality, as I aim to be transparent in navigating the controversial topic of the commercial sex industry and male sexuality. For these reasons, I value that IPA facilitates a dialogue between what my personal understandings are around the commercial sex industry, and the data offered by the participants in this study. Through honoring the participants' stories and contributions, I hope to make a meaningful contribution to the research on men's sexuality and the commercial sex industry, as well as creating a study in which the participants see their experiences reflected back to them in a genuine way.

Participants and Recruitment

The study included 13 participants, with nine individual interview participants and four focus group participants. Participants were recruited through purposeful sampling, specifically

by handing out flyers in classes aimed at men who have been caught purchasing sex (see Figure 2). Participants that expressed interest were contacted for an initial screening interview, and interviews were scheduled at locations that were private and convenient to the interviewee. One individual interview participant opted out of the study after the interview was completed, and the data for the other eight interviews went through the “initial noting” process, (Smith et al., 2009) explained in greater detail in the data analysis section below. The focus group was recruited utilizing the same format as the individual interviews. Once four interviewees were gathered, the focus group occurred utilizing an additional interview schedule (see Figure 4) created in response to the data analysis process of the first individual interviews.

Participants were all drawn from classes aimed at men who had been arrested for purchasing sex. Only one participant attended the classes voluntarily without a prior arrest, however, he reported having been approached by law enforcement for sex buying. Recruitment from these courses was chosen as it ensured that the participants had a history of sex buying behavior. According to Bernal, Cumba-Avilés, and Rodriuez-Quintana (2014), when studying demographically specific groups one should take extra steps to ensure that they are well represented within the study. In order to ascertain the interrelationship between masculinity and sex buying, it was important to ensure that participants had purchased sex in the past which was facilitated by pulling participants from court mandated classes on sex buying.

Demographics. The participants were varied in their exposure to sex buying and the commercial sex industry overall. They were also from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including two participants who hailed from continents other than North America. Ten participants were originally from North America, while one was from Africa and another from South America. Seven of the participants identified as non-White, while five identified

themselves as White. Ethnicities among non-White participants included African-American, Native-Hispanic, and Hispanic. All of the participants identified as male, with one of the participants identifying as bisexual, and 11 identifying as heterosexual. The mean age of participants was 38, ranging from 21 to 73. Sample characteristics are detailed in Table 8 (see Appendix B). Participants differed in employment and educational history, and further breakdown of those demographics may be found in Table 9 (See Appendix B).

Exclusionary criteria. A small participant pool is recommended by Smith et al. (2009) when utilizing IPA. A thoughtful exclusion process facilitates richer qualitative data that is closely tied to the overall research question. As the research was focused on narratives of early male gender socialization, men who did not identify as being born and raised as male were excluded from the study. Furthermore, men who had not purchased sex were excluded from the study in order to analyze sex buyers' particular ideas surrounding masculinity and the commercial sex industry.

Participant risks. The methodology and data collection process documents were submitted to Antioch University Seattle's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the safety of participants. For this study, there were several risks associated with the process of interviewing on the topic of sex and sexuality. There was the possibility that participants may have felt triggered by past memories regarding their development, or possible sexual traumas that shaped their understanding of themselves as sexual beings. They may have felt uncomfortable in thinking about or verbally processing various life experiences. Participants may also have experienced fear of being judged, and may have felt vulnerable to shaming by other participants if they explored material related to their sexual practices during the focus

group. Finally, they may have experienced fear or unease at the thought of information being identified or disseminated in a way that they felt was not congruent with their lived experience.

Participation protection. There were multiple ways in which participant risk was reduced by the researcher and the methodological process. Participants were given an informed consent during the initial intake interview which covered the details of the research project as well as their rights as participants (see Figure 1). The participants were informed that they had the right to end their participation at any point during the study without risk of penalty or reprimand. They were informed that their right to end participation included receiving the \$25 compensation for their time. Furthermore, they were also informed that their ending participation did not affect their ability to receive services through OPS. The participants were offered a list of low cost and free resources in the community that could be sought out in case they required emotional support before, after, or during the interview process (See Figure 5).

Due to the sensitivity of the material discussed, confidentiality was of the utmost importance to protect the rights of participants. Participants' names were only utilized in the case of the informed consent. The informed consents were kept under double lock: inside a locked cabinet which was kept inside a locked building. Interview data and recordings were tracked through the use of pseudonyms. The interview transcriptions were done by the researcher, who also served as the interviewer in the study to minimize the exposure of the raw data to outside readers. Identifying information was removed from all transcripts. The digital files for the recordings and the transcripts were kept on an encrypted drive inside of a locked building to further protect confidentiality.

Participant benefits. The benefits for this study outweighed the risk for three specific reasons. Firstly, participants gained personal insight into their sexuality and how it affected their

daily lives. The second reason was that this research stands to benefit the field of psychology and add to the body of literature discussing men's gender expression and their involvement as buyers of commercial sex. Finally, participants were given referrals to programs within Seattle that were either low cost or free, and that were able to provide them resources to either process their insights or process any negative emotional experiences that they may have encountered.

Procedure

Prior to the interview process, participants were offered a prescreening interview to determine if they met criterion for participation in the study, and to offer them information regarding the purposes of the research project. During the prescreening, a time and place were determined that could offer convenience and privacy for the purposes of the interview. Private study rooms in libraries were the primary interview sites, though University study rooms were also utilized. At the interview meeting, participants were guided through the informed consent for participants document (see Figure 1) and were verbally read the purpose of the study as well as their rights as participants. Their ability to withdraw from the study at any point during the interview process, and after, was discussed and clarified and the participants were given their \$25 compensation. Participants were then given a demographics form which gathered personal information, and also gave a space wherein they were asked to choose a pseudonym that would be utilized during the interview. This questionnaire is provided in Figure 6 (see Appendix A).

Interviews. Participant interviews were an hour and a half long on average and took place at the chosen site that was convenient for participants. Eight individual interviews were completed for the first round of data collection. A recording device was utilized, and the data was destroyed after the transcription was complete. Upon completion of the transcriptions, they were kept on an encrypted drive which was kept under double-lock to ensure the confidentiality

of the participants. The demographics forms and the signed informed consents were kept in separate locked files.

As advised by Smith et al. (2009), a semi-structured open-ended interview was utilized for each individual interview. This style of data gathering was indicated as ideal for IPA research as the interview schedule helped guide the process and simultaneously allowed for participants to explore their personal understandings as they unfolded during the course of the interview. In this manner, the individual interviews differed depending on the aspects of the interview schedule that spoke specifically to that participant; however, similar topics were covered based on the focus of the research question. Participants were then given a form containing referrals for mental health providers in the community that they could access if they wished to continue processing the material covered in the interview.

Once the eight individual interviews were completed, the data from the interview transcripts was analyzed for initial themes and codes. Through this initial coding and data analysis, areas that had not met saturation, or themes that were surprising and not included in the questions of the original interview schedule were coalesced into a new interview schedule for the focus group (see Figures 3 and 4). Participants for the focus group were guided through the same prescreening process, with a venue and time selected that worked for all four participants. Before the focus group, the informed consent, compensation of \$25, and demographics form with the selection of the pseudonym were completed in a group format with all four participants present. The focus group interview was taped on a recording device, and participants were handed a form containing information for low fee service providers in the area at the conclusion of the group interview. The recording data was destroyed after the transcription was completed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

In accordance with the recommendations of Smith et al. (2009), interviews for this study were examined in a circular process with each interview, including the focus group, being utilized as an individual text. The focus of IPA on the hermeneutic process calls for an analysis of the texts in an iterative fashion, with the interpretation being circular and repetitious to facilitate a deeper analysis of the data within the narratives derived from the interview process (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, all the texts underwent the four recommended stages of analysis: reading and rereading, initial noting, developing emerging themes, and searching for connections across emergent themes. Each text from the individual interviews underwent the initial three stages of analysis. After this, the focus group questions were formulated from the initial immersion into the data. Once the focus group text was analyzed using the initial three stages, the fourth step took place as a cross examination of all of the texts simultaneously.

Reading and rereading. The initial stage of interpretation took place during the interview transcription process, wherein the data was being superficially examined as it was transposed into a visual format. As the researcher was also the interviewer and the transcriber of the interview, the data was analyzed and reviewed at least five times for each interview. Twice in the initial interview and transcription process, with a follow up of three additional reads to increase familiarity with the text. During the third read through, a secondary graduate level researcher was introduced to facilitate the validation of the data analysis. This will be discussed further in the section on Validation of Data Analysis.

Initial noting. The second level of interpretation was the analysis of each separate text, with the researcher taking notes and marking observations regarding the transcripts. Smith et al. (2009) recommended the noting process to be open and organic during this phase of the data

analysis. Both the text and the researcher's response to the text are important ingredients in this phase of the textual analysis. Smith et al. (2009) emphasized that the note taking should allow for greater depth of meaning to arise from the text as the researcher analyses the interview slowly and with intention, so as to avoid skimming or seeking data assumed to be present in the text. This process was completed by printing the texts with wide margins, and taking extensive notes on those margins. Each page was analyzed in depth before moving on to the following page to facilitate the depth recommended by Smith et al.

Developing emergent themes. The third phase of analysis was done by examining the initial noting process, and coalescing these notes into emergent themes and categories of meanings. This process served to condense the data into broader categories that captured the important aspects of the participant's experience, and synthesized the information that was being presented in the text. These emergent themes were then examined alongside the original text, as the hermeneutic process of returning to the original text simultaneously facilitated deeper understandings of the text and of the developing themes.

Identifying connections across emergent themes. The next process in data analysis was examining individual texts and the emergent themes to establish overarching themes within each text. Themes that were closely linked were subsumed, whereas themes that related to each other but differed in fundamental ways were separated with their key relationships being identified. An example within this process were themes relating to the types of masculinities that the men described, and the theme of how men began to learn about their masculinity. The two themes had similar threads in speaking about masculinity directly, however, one was connected to their personal identities, whereas the other contained meaningful information regarding their relationships and the process of belonging to certain groups. Notes were made to document the

manner in which the themes were being transformed through the process of maintaining a concurrent journal regarding the process, or within the pages of the texts themselves. An example of the notation, coding, and theme development is provided in Table 7 (see Appendix B).

After completing this stage with all eight individual interviews, the researcher examined the emergent themes and noted areas that were not fully explored, or that required more data for saturation. These were then formulated into questions for the focus group, which were sent out to the co-analyst and to the dissertation committee for review. The revised questions were then utilized for a focus group of four additional participants. The transcript from this focus group was utilized as an individual text, and was analyzed through the four stages of analysis described above.

Looking for patterns across participants. To begin this stage in the data analysis, the focus group and the individual interviews were all thematically analyzed as individual texts. The themes and notes from all the interviews were analyzed across participants in order to identify the relationship between each emergent theme and its relationship to other groupings in the data. Categories of data were coalesced into new groups through subsuming smaller themes into larger ones, or creating superordinate themes that could contain two or more related themes from different interviews. An example of the creation of superordinate themes, Cultivating Change emerged from the smaller themes of change, insight, and consequences that were contained within the analysis of the individual transcripts.

This process may be facilitated through the physical manipulation of the themes gathered from the individual interviews; a process that will take place by utilizing scraps of paper and a large cork board (Smith et al., 2009). The individual context of each participant should not be

lost, especially when dealing with three different groups of interview participants. Thus, the categories and themes from the three groups can be examined both within and between groups for a greater depth of analysis and interpretation.

Validation of Data Analysis

Qualitative research employs a variety of strategies to increase the validity and of research findings and data analysis. Within the IPA research methodology, an important component of increasing validity is the process of foregrounding in which the personal subjective experiences of the researcher are discussed openly (Smith et al., 2009). Further methods were utilized based on recommendations by Creswell (2013), which included triangulation, peer debriefing, and presenting negative or discrepant information. A focus group was included at the end of the individual interviews as a means of extending and clarifying the data collected and as a point of triangulation to the original texts from the individual interviews. Focus groups are a useful additional process that can be completed to clarify and deepen interpretation of data gathered through other methods (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; Kreuger & Casey, 2015).

Focus group. A focus group was utilized to deepen the researcher's understanding of the data. The questions within the focus group were pulled from the emergent themes of the individual interviews. Smaller pools of data that did not meet saturation and larger emergent themes were equally emphasized during the focus group. By analyzing the individual interviews alongside the focus group data, it was possible to locate overlapping themes, to deepen themes that had emerged from the individual interviews, and to clarify aspects of the experiences brought forth by participants that were unclear to the researcher prior to beginning the research.

Triangulation and presentation of negative or discrepant information. Triangulation occurred throughout the final stage of data analysis, as all nine texts were cross examined to validate emergent themes. This process was further facilitated by the data garnered from the focus group, as the original texts could be examined alongside the focus groups response to questions pertaining to the emergent data. Multiple perspectives could thus be presented for each theme, deepening understanding within themes and clarifying the relationships between themes. This was further facilitated by also presenting discrepant understandings within themes. There were multiple points within the research in which one or two participants differed in their experience, or in their understandings from the rest. An example was the idea that most participants presented that the use of pornography was ubiquitous, which contrasted strongly to one participant that stated they had no experience and no interest in using pornography. According to Creswell (2013), human experience is composed of differing perspectives that do not always align, therefore adding differing perspectives to the results resembles the complexity of human experience and adds validity.

Peer debriefing. The process of validating findings through peer consultation was initiated after the initial transcriptions were completed. The data underwent the peer debriefing process during initial noting, developing emerging themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, looking for patterns across participants, and during the writing of the results section. A single peer debriefing consultant was utilized throughout the entire process in order to increase their familiarity with the texts and with the themes as they emerged. This peer debriefing consultant was a doctoral candidate from Antioch University Seattle who successfully completed a dissertation utilizing the IPA methodology. This individual reviewed and coded each of the nine texts, this process was done at regularly scheduled intervals during in person

sessions. The peer debriefing consultant offered comments about the process of analyzing the data, as well as comments about the findings within the analysis. She offered alternative views on the participants' experiences, and prompted further discussion and analysis on areas of the data that required further analysis. The peer debriefing process facilitated deeper exploration of the data and themes, and increased the validity of the research by incorporating multiple perspectives on the data analysis process.

Results

Six primary themes emerged from this study. These included Paths to Masculinity, Transmission of Masculinity, Commercial Sex, Male Understandings of Women, Emotional Lives of Men, and Transitional Moments. Paths to Masculinity and Transmission of Masculinity reflected the ways in which participants experienced and learned about masculinity and where they derived these experiences and lessons. Commercial Sex encapsulated participants' experiences of various sectors of the commercial sex industry, including pornography, strip clubs, and prostitution. Male Understandings of Women captured participants' views of females and how they related to them in their everyday life. Finally, the themes of Emotional Lives of Men and Transitional Moments described participants' emotional experiences and the ways that these experiences facilitated meaningful changes in their lives.

Paths to Masculinity

Table 1

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Themes for Paths to Masculinity

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Tertiary Theme
Paths to Masculinity	In Pursuit of Being Macho	Being Tough Sexual Prowess
	Being a Good Provider	Becoming a Patriarch Sexual Responsibility
	Christianity	Hypocrisy Repression Perceiving Sex as Dangerous
	Rebellion	Rejecting Masculinity Embracing Femininity
	Othering	Striving for the Masculine Ideal Distancing from the Other

Participants discussed their experiences and understandings of what they were taught about masculinity, describing multiple avenues for being men. They described paths to masculinity that shifted based on the context of their lives and their social groups; as one man explained:

You grow up, you get a girl, you go to school, you're permitted to mess up a little you know, act wild, then you kind of buckle down... it's pretty much getting married, having a house, keeping a job, a dog and a cat and kids, that sort of thing.

Describing what it meant to be a man was thus contextualized for these participants by the age in which they were having their experiences, as well as in the surrounding social influences. One participant described:

From my house it was always just to respect women a lot. Like "be a gentleman" and do the things—like hold the door open, open the car door for my mom or family to get out. But then from friends and from school, and movies, it was different. It was like—one of the main rules is sexual gratification.

Participants associated youth with notions of being tough and sexually promiscuous. This was contextualized further by an expectation that they would transition into a "family man" at a later stage. The participants described the importance of age and social markers in their expression of

to both themselves and to others. Participants' processes of masculine development and expression emerged into secondary and tertiary themes within the data.

The paths leading to expressions of masculinity were unique for each man. Many participants described non-linear trajectories, with multiple aspects of masculine expression competing side by side. One man described this process within the Navy: "As soon as you leave on deployment it's like—for some guys it's like things just go out the window—like the family and everything at home." The participant viewed men as leaving the responsibilities of family behind due to being "out of the zip code," and having access to practices such as buying sex. Thus, the path to being a man who purchased sex could occur during the same period of time in which the man viewed himself as a family man that was in a committed relationship.

The two most prominent secondary themes were In Pursuit of Being Macho, and Being a Good Provider. The In Pursuit of Being Macho theme refers to an identity characterized by youth, toughness, and includes an emphasis on multiple sexual experiences. Being a Good Provider emerged from participants' discussions of becoming an older family-oriented man who is sexually committed to his partner. The orientation the participants had towards women was a highly salient component of these two paths. As one participant explained, "you were either looking for a conquest or you were looking for the mother of your children." Other paths that emerged from the narratives were Christianity, Rebellion, and Othering. These three alternative paths were influenced by contexts of religion, rejecting social norms of masculinity, and defining themselves through identifying and distancing from the faults in other men.

In pursuit of being macho. The data highlighted a particular path towards masculinity that included striving for, or at least projecting outwardly, expressions of violence, and an

eagerness for sexually diverse encounters. One participant described his personal encounter with these ideas in the military as follows:

If you were a virgin, the way to become a man was one of two things—going to war and having sex... [sex] was part of becoming a man, and it needed to be done. There's no point in you going out and going to war and dying out there and not even getting these other trials in... You know you gotta get your chances before you even lose your chances.

Participants recounted the manners in which they continued to seek experiences they associated with youthful masculinity throughout their lives. One man recounted feeling “virile” through his use of pornography and masturbation multiple times a day:

As an older man, seeing your days of sexual identity, maybe identity isn't the right word, but prowess maybe, just to see whether you could still perform one time after another even if it was masturbation.

Thus, In Pursuit of Being Macho was connected to a sense of youthful sexual performance and achievement which continued on past men's youth.

Emergent from the data were two tertiary themes which described how men pursued a macho masculinity. The first was Being Tough, which participants associated with performing heightened levels of aggression, using violence to solve problems, and not disclosing personal emotional experiences. The second tertiary theme was having Sexual Prowess, which included prioritizing and seeking sexual encounters, lying about sexual access to maintain masculine identity, and accessing sex through any means necessary.

Being tough. Participants responded to inquiries about masculinity by discussing social expectations they encountered during their youth. These experiences included the need to be unemotional, aggressive, strong, and dominant within interpersonal relationships. One participant related his personal experience of being expected to be “aggressive, something of a fighter, macho, not feminine.” Another man described his experience of being taught to express his masculinity as follows:

That side would really, you know, advocate violence if necessary. You know, basically they would tell you “if someone gets the jump on you, you grab a shovel and hit them across the face with it,” or something like that. Or they would say like, uh “if you’re being bullied go up to the biggest bully and punch them in the mouth.”

Participants who experienced interpersonal tension and school bullying were advised by men and women in their families to defend themselves through responding with violence and toughness. The participant went on to say, ““I think there was expectations to be aggressive—something of a fighter, macho—not feminine.” These messages of violence and toughness were offered as responses to interpersonal tension and school bullying and were also contrasted with the idea of femininity.

Family dynamics for participants included many examples of toughness, violence, and aggression. Notably within those narratives were often stories in which the participants described themselves as assuming a tough man identity and exerting dominance onto others.

One man described,

Even with my little brother—he was 3 years younger than me... at that young age he was always right there with me in height and build so whenever fights broke out between the brothers I was still at fault because I was the older one even though, you know, a guy who’s the same type as you throws a punch you’re going to defend yourself—I was still at fault.

Another participant described using his ability to be tough and violent as a way of exerting dominance over his father, thus ending years of domestic abuse that had been inflicted upon him.

He shared,

There came one time when he came and accused me about something I didn’t do, and I said “no.” And he came across the room like he was going to hit me, and I said, “don’t you do that.” And I leaned back and kicked him across the room and he bounced off a banister, or a bench, and he really banged up his leg. And he came back and gave me a black eye. And that’s the last time he ever raised a hand to me.

The participants that described taking on tough and violent aspects of masculinity identified particular events and struggles in which they found themselves having to utilize these ways of being in order to cope with the violence they encountered.

Descriptions of toughness were not limited to times of youth or school, but also were described as present in developing relationships with other men into adulthood. One participant recounted changes in his relationships with other men. He stated:

I feel like I've got everything that other men that I see as men have got and so, now I feel a little bit tougher after being in jail. And so all these different things make me feel like I have closed off almost—like men should be.

This participant's experiences in jail allowed him to adopt a masculinity that was more rigid, as he also disclosed "I felt like I was being taken advantage of just because I was a nice guy... I used to be pathetic and stuff and now I kind of just let that part go." This tough persona that was further developed within his work environment at a construction job reinforced a sense of feeling more at home with his all male peer group, and also more comfortable with himself as a man. Many men described the aggressive and tough demeanor of masculinity as a self-protection measure, which also translated to their emotional lives with others.

In addition to the participants' descriptions of toughness as violent and aggressive, they discussed the importance of being unemotional as a symbol of toughness and masculinity. One man summed up this theme by stating, "it goes back to the man thing, we aren't supposed to have emotional problems let alone do something to deal with them." Another man offered,

If you do run into hardships in your life, divorce or depression or anything like that I think your default mechanisms of like well what are the basics as a man; you like to eat, you like to sleep, and like [sex]! Go indulge in those you'll feel better!

In addition, this expectation to not disclose emotions was also extended to the participants' experience of love and intimacy. One man responded to the question of whether or not he discussed love with his male friends by stating "Probably more about sex. Love was more of a

private thing.” In this way, Being Tough emerged from the narratives of masculinity that did not include emotional disclosure, whether dealing with positive or negative emotions.

Sexual prowess. From the data emerged a theme of moving towards a macho ideal through portraying and enacting certain types of sex and sexuality. Men described needing to be viewed, and needing to see themselves as being sexually prepared, sexually aggressive, and as utilizing sex as a personal resource. One man explained this identity as follows:

It’s usually up to the man to pursue. To convince, to be masculine, to be aggressive in that way. To be kind of ready in that way. You know, like a soldier, being ready at a moment’s notice. But that’s really what a real man is like, or you know, is. You see someone that you like or you find attractive and then you go ask them out, and if they say no, you keep at it. Or if they say no, you go ask somebody else out.

The men describing this orientation to sex as a part of masculine identity also identified the importance of faking this embodiment of sexuality: “We went on the date, and I didn’t think that it would go further than that, really. I mean you put on a big game in those days, but really you have nothing to back it up.” The participants emphasized this manner of exhibiting sexuality as both a personal sexuality, and also a presentation of their masculinity towards male peers and women.

A lack of sexual preparedness and prowess was experienced by men as a lack of personal and interpersonal belonging. As one man described when asked why he perceived it to be important to have sex with many different women, he responded “it’s weird to not. Something must be wrong with you or something like that.” Another man connected shame to his purchasing of sex, specifically due to his lack of performance of sexual prowess:

I think I could walk into a bar and with enough confidence go home with somebody that night, I think. To me, it was just kind of a shame that I was paying for it rather than going out and finding it another way.

These participants viewed sexual prowess as a given, and it was understood to be part of their identity as men. Sex buying was described by them as contradictory to this conceptualization as

sexual experiences were something they should be able to access easily and readily. This conceptualization relates to the participants' understandings of women's sexuality as a resource.

Females were perceived as resources that were readily available to men who were looking to fulfill a masculine ideal of machismo. One man described this idea stating,

All you have to do is go to a bar, a club, supermarket, you can even go to church. You can find anyone. There is a lot of fish out there all you have to do is talk you know. You don't have to pay for anything. Not at all.

Another man offered the following insight into his views of women, "I don't want to say entitled because that sounds kind of fucked up, but like women were there for entertainment kind of."

This concept of utilizing sex and women as a resource was reinforced by a tendency to view all sexual experiences as intrinsically positive. As one man described, "[Sex] is always good, not problematic. Always you know, it's just something that you didn't have to think about too much. That it's never, never a bad scenario." Viewing women as a sexual resource was facilitated by the participants' tendency to view women as entertainment and to view sex as always positive.

These understandings of women as an accessible sexual resource were important in self-conceptualizations of personal sexual prowess, in that men were aware of social expectations that they should have prolific amounts of easy sex. One man recounted a specific term for this, "Smash and bash, get what you can, as much as you can, and then leave." Men were thus described as needing to be constantly seeking out these sexual experiences, and to be "the sexual aggressors" in order to embody and portray their desired masculinity.

Participants described the manner in which lying was utilized to still present a masculine identity in the absence of sexual experiences with women. As one participant stated,

There might have been some grain of truth in it. Like one guy made up this story, or I assume he made up this story, about having sex with this girl out at the state park. Okay,

that could probably happen. The part about him being on the edge of a cliff with Boy Scout groups at the base of the cliff—that, I seriously doubt.

When asked why men told lies or stretched the truth about sexual exploits, he responded, “Same reason I did. To be cool! To be that guy that did something weird, be that guy that stood out from the others. The Alpha male so to speak.” For participants, Sexual Prowess could be demonstrated through lying about sexual encounters to avoid being seen as sexually inexperienced and to bond with male peers.

Some men in the study, while describing past experiences of sexual prowess equated all forms of dating with prostitution. One participant described:

The idea among the guys was, I’m not going to pay for sex when I can go out and get it for free from some gal. Well it wasn’t really free—you invested a lot of money, to get to know someone well enough to have sex with them.

For these men, sexually available women included people in prostitution, and paying for sex was seen as a means of entering and establishing themselves in the world of masculinity. One man described his experience in adolescence of going to a brothel. He shared,

There was no way for me to get close to women any other way around. So, I had this feeling of, if I don’t do this, like, if I don’t go through this experience, see a woman naked, I’m never going to do it. Like I may die tomorrow, and I missed out on that.

Access to women’s bodies was described by these men as an essential life experience and purchasing sex was seen as a valid avenue for expressing male identity. Sexual prowess and experience emerged as an essential component of the theme In Pursuit of Being Macho, with sex buying functioning as an important option for those that feared not being able to access this experience they associated with masculinity through dating.

Being a good provider. Participants described Being a Good Provider as a developmental milestone reached after a period of being on the path of In Pursuit of Being

Macho. One participant explained his process of realizing he was needing to begin this transition. He shared,

I started realizing that I was, quote unquote, getting on in age. I was 23, 24, but I was the old man in the army. At that rank, at that age, I was old. So I started feeling like I was getting on in years, and I started talking to people more. And I just realized, I want a companion, and that's when I started figuring out that that's what I want.

The path towards masculinity for Being a Good Provider necessitated female companionship in the form of a long-term relationship or marriage. As another participant described, “And eventually you pick one and get married and do the checklist of marriage; kids, house, pet, second house, retirement and just go down the line.” Notably, stories of Being a Good Provider were not completely relegated to a developmental transition. Participants also recounted stories of being the “man of the house” at a young age due to responsibilities placed upon them.

Being a Good Provider had themes that related to the particular constellation of relationships related to family life, but also to employment and to sexuality. These themes were divided into two tertiary themes; Becoming a Patriarch, and Sexual Responsibility. The data associated with the theme of Becoming a Patriarch contained narratives of the role of men as central figureheads in the family, as well as their fiscal responsibility to the family. Sexual Responsibility emerged as an important component to this masculine identity, as men were described as having a sexual responsibility to the women they were committed to, and women were described as having to sexually satisfy the men that were providing for them.

Becoming a patriarch. An idealized manhood that was conceptualized as the embodiment of a central figurehead within the family and the community emerged from the data. The qualities associated with this role were that he provided for himself and his family, while respecting and mentoring those he encountered. As explained by one participant, being a man meant “to embrace the responsibilities of a man, which is to be a good husband, to be a good

father, to be willing to tutor younger men to help them make the right decisions.” In essence, the patriarch was a role model for masculinity, and was someone that others could rely on for financial or relational support. One man defined masculinity by stating that it was “to be the head of a household while considering your spouse’s opinion, while being prepared to make the final decision.” Thus, an important aspect of the Being a Good Provider was having the position of the central pillar of the family and of his community.

Fiscal responsibilities were stressed by many participants as quintessential in describing masculinity. A participant elaborated on this idea, “It’s your ass that needs to be the one working, or getting a job, paying for everything that needs to be taken care of, taking care of the kids, mentoring them, guiding and everything else.” In many men’s descriptions of masculinity, it was this fiscal responsibility that positioned them as the head of the household.

This role of financial provider often extended beyond the scope of the relationship, as one participant recounted his past relationship, “We weren’t really a couple anymore, but I was still committed to taking care of her and helping her out. So, it wasn’t a clean break and then you go off and rebuild yourself.” Becoming a Patriarch was described as a commitment to be a fiscally responsible, regardless of relational circumstances. For one participant, his responsibility to his wife as the man meant staying within a committed relationship, despite being told that his wife no longer loved him:

So, you know, I know where we’re going, we are going to live our lives through the way we are, and the reason she is staying with me in my mind is that she doesn’t want to divide our wealth because it would be bad for both of us, and she doesn’t want to not have access to the grandchildren because they’re all on my side. That is something that really bothers me.

Being a patriarch was experienced by men as a deep responsibility towards family, and towards their female partners.

In addition to increased responsibility, culturally informed ideas of respect and chivalry were also emergent in discussions of Being a Good Provider. One participant, who was an immigrant to the United States, emphasized respect as masculinity when he responded to the question of what masculinity meant for him in his present life:

I am able to take care of myself. I respect the people at work, as a man as a lady I respect them in that role, I see them in that role as this is a lady this is a man, I respect her as a lady I respect him as a man.

This participant's reflection of masculinity was contextualized by his upbringing, in which gender roles were far more circumscribed in his home country. For the participants from Western cultures, respect sounded more like the following participant's example:

They raised me with values to respect women and, it's hard to say. I guess some of it might have just been what I saw from them. My parents have always been together my whole life, they're still together. But yeah they, I was taught to open doors for women you know, pull their chair out, those kinds of things

Discussions of respect, particularly towards women, accompanied values associated with that of identifying as a patriarch within a family system.

Finally, narratives that focused on being a leader and mentoring young men were highlighted as important by participants. One man described his relationship with his younger siblings. He stated,

If I think about it, it was kind of a leadership type of role. I had to set by example and I was kind of blazing the path since I was the first child, learning new things... they all kind of had to follow in my path.

The participant's positionality as the eldest child denoted a higher level of responsibility and obligation which required him to lead by example. Other participants described witnessing male figureheads, and taking note of their successes with young men. One recalled, "He would just talk to them about [their bad behavior] and get what he wanted out of their response without

yelling at them, cursing at them, or belittling them.” For these participants mentorship and leadership were vital component of relating to others that were in their social sphere.

Sexual responsibility. Embedded in from the data associated with Being a Good Provider were stories of the unique experience of sexual intimacy with partners, of seeing sex as a commitment, and of accessing commercial sex to satisfy a perceived lack of erotic connection. Men described intimacy as different and separate from the sex that was sought out within other forms of masculinity. One participant stated, “I think that I have had sex with women, but I have had love, made love, been intimate with my wife.” For many participants, intimacy, or the combination of love and sex, were experienced exclusively within committed relationships that were contextualized within their role as the Provider.

These associations between love and sex were described as beginning at a young age. Participants recalled that the connection between sexual intimacy and the role of the Provider were often relayed to them as inextricable. As one participant stated,

Most of the guys that I knew, including myself, would not want to have sex with someone unless it’s someone you wanted to marry, because they might get pregnant, and then you might have to marry them so. Because we all would have done the right thing, marry them.

The sexual commitment expressed within the idea of the provider included the notion of celibacy in order to preserve the marriage. When asked whether or not he would have been willing to stay in a sexless marriage, a participant responded:

If it had been a situation where the other person said “I know we have these problems, I know this and this has happened but believe me you’re still the number one person”... Yeah I think I could have adjusted my lifestyle and been fine—it wouldn’t have mattered that much.

Men reported sometimes tolerating a decrease in intimacy as an aspect of conscious decision making to commit to their partner. As one man expressed, “We’re always going to love sex but we are not going to be as sexual as we were when we were 18. As you get older you hopefully

got better priorities other than sex, or watching sex.” The shift from prioritizing sexual prowess to a place of Sexual Responsibility was thus described as a conscious choice to reorganize their lives as participants embodied Being a Good Provider.

Sexual Responsibility was also described by the men as something they expected from their wives within the role of the provider. As one participant stated, “The desire to go have any kind of sex you want, and get things that you don’t get at home, especially from a wife that has declared that she doesn’t love you anymore, is pretty powerful.” This participant suggested that it was difficult to avoid purchasing sex due to feeling that his wife was not providing him with the emotional and sexual experiences he desired. Another participant reported a responsibility for the wife to have her erotic energy associated solely with her husband:

The role of the man in marriage or the relationship was always to satisfy the wife or the girlfriend, first and foremost sexually. And if you weren’t doing that then you weren’t performing the way you should. Of course when the vibrator came in, that went out the window.

Narratives about sexuality emerged as specifically relating to sexual commitment from the man to the women in their lives; that included an understanding of reciprocal sexual responsibility on the part of the female partner towards the men who embodied the ideals of Being a Good Provider.

A female partner’s lack of living up to sexual responsibilities towards the man was reported by participants as validating and promoting their engagement within the commercial sex industry, through porn or sex buying. One participant, when asked why he first purchased sex, stated “I was looking for more passion is the way I’ve described it. Like my girlfriend—at this point, we had been together five or six years—and there was like no intimacy or buildup.” Men described their sexual disappointment in their committed relationships as part of their narrative for sex buying. As one man stated about purchasing sex,

It wasn't sexual gratification, it was emotion I wanted. And I knew it was not right, it really bothered me. I hated myself every time I did it. But you know it's just a matter of, I have this wife at home that only wants to live with me because it's convenient.

Participants' values regarding sexual commitment towards their wives conflicted with purchasing sex, however their unmet sexual desires were perceived as a lapse on the part of their wives causing them to seek sexual gratification outside of the marriage, specifically through sex buying.

Christianity. Christianity was a theme that arose in dialogues of masculinity. While in some ways this theme paralleled that of Being a Good Provider, it differed in important ways. Some similarities lay in many of the traditional gender roles of the man as patriarch. As stated by one participant: "In a traditional Mormon house, women stay home and raise the children, the men go out and work and provide financial support and then the man is also supposed to teach the boy how to be a man." The similarities thus centered upon traditional male roles as head of the family.

The differences between Being a Good Provider and Christianity were expressed and articulated within emergent tertiary themes of Hypocrisy, Sexual Repression, and Sex as the Root of Evil. One strong narrative included descriptions of how views and moral understandings of sexuality within the Christian faith differed greatly from actions observed in the larger society. Other major narratives pointed towards messages of repression in terms of sex and sexual impulses, as well as conceptualization of sex as something dangerous.

Hypocrisy. Participants who had developed within Christian institutions of faith distinguished the morality valued and espoused within the context of their homes and churches from the values they experienced in their daily lives. One man explained this succinctly, "So movies, TV, and my friends, they were like 'yeah sex is normal, it's something that guys do with a lot of different girls.' Yeah, I guess it's completely opposite to how I was raised." For these

men, there was a bifurcation between their spiritual upbringing, and the sexual behaviors that they would engage in outside which were promoted by their peers and in the larger popular culture. One man expressed,

Yeah, It's not like when I'm having sex with someone that it's like, "Oh damn, I shouldn't have done that." It's maybe months later or days later, you know, "Maybe one of these days it's going to catch up to me and I'm gonna go to Hell or something, so I need to change."

The participants described their difficulties in navigating their desire to live up to specific spiritual and moral standards in the context of competing values as portrayed in popular media and in their peer groups.

Sexuality vacillated back and forth between an experience of a loss of control, and an act of rebellion for the participants that described this moral dilemma. One participant described experiencing this dynamic while visiting brothels as a teenager. He shared, "at the same time it was being kind of daring, but on the border of being wrong, of being looked down upon by adults... they had this kind of moral Catholic thing going on." Another participant described his feelings after he had his first sexual encounter at the age of 19:

I don't know about specifically purchasing sex, but just sex in general was something that once I did it the box was kind of open and it was like, there's no boundaries now I can just do it. I can just live. So I think the restrictiveness definitely made me a little more explosive, or I don't know if that's the right word—crazy, or all over the place.

Participants experienced a sense of hypocrisy from others in the Christian faith and from themselves, particularly when it came to sex and sexuality. They viewed this hypocrisy and the underlying feelings as one possible reason for their engagement with the commercial sex industry.

Repression. The men in this study that highlighted Christianity also highlighted the tertiary theme of Repression as part of their development. Participants described repression as

being comprised of the silencing of sexual topics and the outright shaming of sex and sexuality.

One participant relayed the following story:

My grandmother got into a weird thing—she’s very homophobic—and she got into a weird state where she would scream—when people would kiss on screen—this was mid ‘80s on, she would just scream the word, “AIDS!” at the TV. Always. Men or women kissing.

This example was given by the participant to describe the overt fear that was utilized in his household to avoid conversations about sex and sexuality, including when content appeared on TV. Another participant shared,

And in church—I grew up Mormon—and a lot of that is like “No masturbation!” That’s a huge thing. A lot of things that would be somewhat normal to kids, my parents were like really hands off. They didn’t really want to talk about it, but they didn’t really want me to be involved in it.

For this participant, there was an implicit judgement regarding sexuality, and an intentional silence as a way of expressing intolerance for these types of conversations and behaviors.

For some of the participants the experience of shame in regard to their sexual development was connected to their stories of purchasing sex.

Even if I don’t believe the religion it’s still in the back of my mind, it’s still there—like a part of how I grew up. So, I think it did—the shame and the guilt—over the years made me a little more susceptible to [sex buying], I feel like.

Participants that described a Christian upbringing connected the repression experienced in their developmental years with their sexuality in their adolescent and adult lives, including their sex buying practices.

Perceiving sex as dangerous. A few of the men that regarded Christianity as part of their masculinity highlighted a personally perceived relationship between sex and many of the negative aspects of their lives. As one participant stated, “I kind of had an epiphany that pretty much anything bad that had happened in my life I could connect back to sex.” This participant went on to explain:

If I had not tried to have sex or cared about it as much at that time in my life, I could have taught myself what I'm already going to school for now. I don't know—like, I could be a very successful person already because I didn't focus on sex—I focused on instead other things I really enjoy.

The participant's wish that he had controlled his sexual desires before they lead to his arrest was mirrored by another participant:

That's why it's so shameful for me to think back how I got trapped in this thing. And it really is a trap. When you submit yourself to things like this, it's a trap. It's hard to get out of because once you taste the fruits of outside of marriage sexual encounters—of course with the event of the internet coming online it became so easy to get porn and stuff—that it was hard to say no. That's what really lead into the issues that I ended up with when I was arrested.

For these two men, their understandings of sexuality were captured by the notion that sex is dangerous, and reported how sex lead them towards purchasing sex due to their lack of control over their own sexuality.

Rebellion. The secondary theme of Rebellion varied from the last three described, as the participants' stories of masculinity within this theme were characterized as acts of rebellion against cultural norms. One participant described transgression as part of his rebellion. He stated,

I explored a lot of the dark stuff of myself intentionally, in the sense of breaking completely up with Catholicism, breaking up with normative values of what was expected of me in family circles, and academic circles, and work circles.

For this participant and other men, their identity formation as men included rejecting social norms of masculinity and attempting to find alternate paths. Participants differed in regard to when they accessed the path of Rebellion to define their masculinity, with some using it as a platform to transition into Provider, and others integrating it with other identities simultaneously. As one participant stated:

From that adolescent age to mid-twenties to thirties, once you start having kids you start giving a whole lot less—for lack of a better word—fucks about what other people think about you. I will take my daughter out, I will hug my daughter, I will give my daughter a

kiss. I will take my wife and give her a kiss in the middle of the mall if I want to. And you know what? I don't give a shit.

Rebellion was thus a path of masculinity that both intersected masculine identities, and transitioned between them.

From the data on Rebellion emerged two threads around how participants rejected the social norms of masculinity; Rejecting Masculinity and Embracing Femininity. Participants elaborated on how pushing away ideals of masculinity was an important process in developing their personal identities as men. For some participants, an additional aspect of rejecting masculinity and taking on the path of Rebellion included accepting and celebrating the feminine aspects of themselves.

Rejecting masculinity. Participants reported rejecting groups and their associated social norms, and assumptions regarding masculinity. For one participant, this process occurred within his church group. He shared,

They were talking about shepherding and you need someone over you and someone under you, and I says, "yeah but that's not what we need, we need to know how to be husbands and fathers." "Well this is what we are teaching you with this." I says, "no you're not. You're teaching us how to have someone over us, and someone under us. It's authoritarian. I want to know how to become a husband and a father." And that's about as far as it went, and they said "that's about enough of you."

This participant's rejection of masculinity was direct and overt, taking place during a conversation with other men. For other participants, it was a more personal and internal process: "I still, I mean, I never really subscribed to the certain macho stereotypes, or certain stereotypes of aggressiveness, or a you know, I've always been an advocate for friends of mine who are women." For participants, Rebellion was a path that was chosen, either overtly or internally, involving movement away from values that they perceived as pertaining to the negative aspects of masculinity.

Notably research participants that described rebelling against masculinity did not necessarily behave or make choices that differed greatly from other men. One participant recounted his initial rejection of his male peers' sexual escapades,

We were all part of a group that weren't interested in being part of the gang. It's not really a gang, but it's a gang mentality. I think that's why, we just didn't care about all those things, they were all kind of bragging about how many girlfriends they had, how many times a day they jerked off, or talking about this or that teacher in sexual ways.

He later described how his future behavior of visiting brothels differed from that of the gang that he initially rejected,

I saw it as sort of an opportunity to do it. To explore things that I thought I would never get otherwise. In retrospect, I don't see any connection to trying to belong with other men, and going there, because the guys that I would go there with were not part of this cool gang kind of crowd, we were kind of the outsider of those groups. So we wouldn't go there to bond with each other.

The participant and his friends were considered outsiders that were not interested on focusing on sex as a means of belonging, rather the exact same sexual behaviors of visiting brothels were seen as an act of exploration rather than being connected to masculinity. The identity of the Rebel was predicated on the ideological rejection of perceived masculine ideals and a rejection of the pursuits of those ideals, rather than being predicated on behavioral differences from their "masculine" peers.

Embracing femininity. Embracing femininity as a part of one's identity was framed by participants as an additional way of rebelling against social norms of masculinity. One participant disclosed his personal feelings of femininity as follows. He explained,

For the longest time, I related to females a lot more. You know how they say in every joke there's a small amount of truth—I would always joke that I would make the greatest female in the world. At that time, I loved to go shopping with the friends, I could go with friends and pick out the clothes that they wanted and such, I could gossip with the best of them—I could do all of those things but I was in a male body. Now did I feel like I was a woman? No.

This participants' understanding of rebellion as part of his masculine identity was interconnected to an embracing of attributes and preferences he associated strongly with women. Participants that discussed their feminine aspects frequently asserted and emphasized their male gender identity. Another man who discussed the theme of the rebel described it as follows: "Even if I consider myself a man that doesn't mean that I don't have any femaleness in me, it means that I have predominately maleness in me, but that there are also parts of me that are not man." Some participants who experienced a sense of rejection, or tended to distance from other male peer groups, developed a sense of comfort with personal feminine qualities as an important aspect of their identities as men.

Othering. The Participants described types of men that they distinguished behaviorally from themselves and their own expressions of masculinity. As one participant described:

I just remember from a young age—maybe very early teens—there was a differentiation that I had where there were guys and there were men. Men were proper and—I don't want to say perfect and didn't do anything wrong—but it was more like guys are the ones that are not necessarily the greatest to be around. They don't treat women right—whereas a man will treat a woman properly.

These narratives described ways that participants' identities as men were conceptualized and internalized by contrasting an ideal against the "guy," or the man with undesirable behaviors or characteristics.

From the data on Othering flowed the tertiary themes of Striving for the Masculine Ideal and Distancing from the Other. The participants' discussed crafting an idealized version of masculinity that they would attempt to approximate as part of developing their personal masculine identity. Furthermore, participants described defining behaviors that were outside their ideals of masculinity, and distancing themselves from these behaviors ideologically.

Striving for the masculine ideal. Othering narratives emerged as participants engaged in efforts toward defining an aspirational masculinity. These aspirational masculinities were

contextualized in both past and present experiences. The participant that offered the insight regarding “men” and “guys” went on to state: “And I always wanted to strive to be a man, not a guy.” He reflected,

I didn’t see myself as a guy, because I knew I didn’t want to be a guy, but I didn’t see myself as a man. Now where did I fall into the whole masculinity as a male? Where? I couldn’t tell you.

The conceptualization of an ideal masculinity that did not contain the behaviors of “guys” served as a point of departure for many participants as they sought to embody these idealized qualities of masculinity. Another participant described his experience when an idealized role model became divorced. He explained,

I knew I didn’t want to be like my dad towards my children or towards my wife. But that’s a far cry from how you should behave because I had no model. You know I had a very close friend and, he has five children, and I used to just enjoy watching how he talked to his wife, how they talked about things, how he was with his children, and how he disciplined his children. But here’s this guy that’s in his early 30s that I use as a model on how you behave with a wife. Kind of peculiar isn’t it, in a way?

The participant’s ideal example of manhood contrasted with his father’s behavior, which the participant rejected and moved away from in developing his own masculinity. The Crafted Ideal for many of these men was generated in contrast to men that they perceived as lesser than themselves.

Distancing from the other. The second tertiary theme from the Other Guy narratives was the experience of judging men for behavior that the participants later embodied themselves. A participant stated,

I think I had an expectation or an image basically of what someone paying for sex was like. Like an old person, or obese person, or really ugly, someone that can’t walk into a bar and pick up a woman.

The participant viewed sex buying as a behavior of lesser men whereas he felt: “I could walk into a bar and with enough confidence go home with somebody that night.” His identification as

someone that was sexually desirable contributed to personal confusion as to his own participation in a system he saw as relegated to the undesirable other.

Another participant described his experience of what he thought of sex buyers prior to his buying sex, and his reflection of himself now. He stated,

I looked at them and was like “man you’re kind of a dirt bag, you can’t even keep a girlfriend or keep a whatever it might be.” And I look at it from my side—and yeah I had a wife and kid, “what the Hell am I thinking” sort of thing.

Many of the participants in the study considered their participation in the commercial sex industry as antithetical to their overall identity as men, despite having bought sex.

Notably, in discussing Othering, men described shifting their moral stances for certain behaviors to make room for previously undesired activities. For one participant, despite feeling that buying sex was something he did not agree with originally, he felt it was justified as it was preferable to being an “alpha male.” He elaborated on his experience of purchasing sex after his marriage ended but he was still living with his wife:

“You’re going to be this alpha male confident guy and get what you want.” Rather than subscribe to that, you go well there’s this other option where someone—you know—you have two consenting adults—and then it is what it is.

Thus, for participants, the narratives of Othering to define personal masculinity were important in understanding who they did not wish to be as men, and also in attempting to make meaning when they went against their own personal values.

Commercial Sex

Table 2

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Themes of Commercial Sex

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Tertiary Theme
Commercial Sex	Interconnected Exposure	Forced Exposure
		Unwanted Exposure
	Normalized	Commercial Sex as Ubiquitous
		Male Sexual Development
		Social Sanctioning
		Social Pressure
	Offering a Rationale	Social Upbringing
		Biological Impulses
		Maximizing Sexual Gratification
		Avoidance of Rejection
	Identity and Commercial Sex	Avoidance of Emotion
		Buyer Proficiency
	Purchasing a Fantasy	Navigating Moral Dilemmas
		Dating and Virility
		Emotional Intimacy
		Fetishism
	Thrill of Planning	Pulling Down the Veil
	Dangers of Commercial Sex	Habit Forming
		Mentally Harmful
		Cheating
		Ambivalence

Participants relayed specific understandings of their relationships to the commercial sex industry and how it was integrated into their sexual and interpersonal development. Many highlighted strong connections between the different aspects of the commercial sex industry. As one stated,

I mean the negatives for me is that there's been points in my life, especially when I was going through this messed up time when I was actually buying sex, where sex with my partner was really hard because I had all kinds of mixed feelings about it. And then porn became kind of a way of escaping that in many ways... so the negative part is that it can shape the way you, what you consider erotic or not.

This participant noted the manner in which the use of pornography was a method for him to escape his emotions, and the subsequent changes that occurred to his sexuality and what he found erotic.

Interconnected. Participants shared narratives of how their experiences with different sectors of the commercial sex industry were interconnected. One man explained,

It's an ominous insidious power. And it begins with porn. The goal of porn is not to give you something that will make you disgusted with it. The goal of porn is to give you something that you want to follow up on... because the pornography wasn't doing what I thought or expected it to. It didn't provide the outlet. Whereas, I thought prostitution might do that.

Another participant highlighted the relationship between pornography and prostitution as facilitating his comfort with seeing women be degraded:

I think in part, [pornography] kind of planted a seed of, I'm not trying to blame that on me turning to prostitution but in a way me seeing women in those situations, basically being degraded, it just started making me numb to it and I think if I didn't see that I may not have started to become numb to it yet.

Participants reported that they viewed pornography as being connected to the development of their sex buying practices.

Participants' stories regarding commercial sex were also interwoven in discussions of strip clubs. As one participant stated, "I seem to recall someone basically alluding to, that stripping was almost like a gateway into prostitution." For the participants, their experience of stripping and sex buying were proximal. This proximity was both in their views of the women who stripped as being one step away from prostitution, and of themselves as one step away from purchasing sex. One participant described his experience of this connection as follows: "In countries in Latin America the line between a strip club and a brothel is very blurry. It's not like in the United States where a strip club is a strip club. Usually they are both." For the

participants, sex buying and strip clubs were an experience that were, while sometimes separate, also interconnected.

Another participant discussed his regular visits to strip clubs as contributing to his decision to lose his virginity through paying for sex:

I would drop all kinds of money at the strip club—or at least what I considered to be all kinds of money—and I would always leave with an empty feeling... And it was kind of like the thought of “why do I need to go to a strip club and just drop \$20 for a three minute song when I can drop \$120 for 60 minutes with somebody just being there and the potential of having sex.” ... I was 24 and I didn’t want to internally be carrying that around anymore... if I hadn’t have done it that way, I don’t know when it would have happened naturally.

Some participants described strip clubs as serving a singular and specific function in their history which later developed into a regular habit of sex buying in order to meet ongoing sexual desires. Participants highlighted the myriad ways in which engaging with one sector of the commercial sex industry connected to the use of other sectors including prostitution.

Exposure. Participants recounted stories of how being exposed to aspects of the commercial sex industry affected their sexual development and their eventual use of pornography and prostitution. Notably, one participant reported not having been exposed to pornography. When the participant was asked if men in his country commonly did not use pornography, he stated: “Yeah it’s common because we don’t have access that much to it. Growing up there was one TV in the city where I grew up. Only one TV for the entire city.” The participant went on to reply, “No,” when asked if he used pornography in the past, or presently, or ever. His narrative served as a counterpoint to other participants’ stated assumptions of exposure to pornography as a normative and ubiquitous developmental experience.

For the other participants within the study, their experiences of being exposed to pornography and sex buying fell into three distinct tertiary themes. The first theme of Forced

Exposure was comprised of two particular narratives in which the participants were subject to adult men's decisions to expose them to pornography. The theme of Unwanted Exposure focused on the stories regarding being exposed to pornography that were undesirable or unwanted during the time the participant encountered the material. And finally, Commercial Sex as Ubiquitous contained the stories of men who describe pornography and prostitution as being easy to access and difficult to avoid, particularly within certain groups of men.

Forced exposure. For some of the participants, their initial encounters with the commercial sex industry came through being exposed to pornography at a young age by older men. One participant described sexual abuse that was initiated by introducing him and his younger brother to pornography,

I first saw, or witnessed, pornography when I was about eight years old, and that was via a babysitter, who was a male babysitter, who was probably about ten years older and had found some videotapes that my father had stashed... . And after a while he just kind of left that running in the background and he was wanting to play a game where we all took our pants off and ran from one end of the house together.

The participant described the manner in which his father's pornography was utilized to initiate a forced sexual encounter. For another participant, the unwanted pornography was viewed as incidental and was not associated with the intent of the man who provided the porn within a VHS of cartoons:

I was probably like seven, and he would give us VHS [tapes] of cartoons that he would record. I guess one time he had recorded pornography on one of these and forgot to completely override it and record over it. So my cartoon was over and then for like a few seconds there was like fuzziness and then porn is on my tv and I'm home alone, and I watch it.

This participant described his mixed emotions after watching the pornography explaining, "I didn't want the guy to get in trouble for giving us these VHS [tapes] but I also was like ashamed that I saw it almost." For the participants that described early forced exposure to pornography, shame and silence were salient aspects of that experience.

Some participants described stories of sharing and exposing others to pornography. As one participant described,

I remember having a friend that had a journal... he started filling it up with porn and it became kind of a class thing... There was some hilarious experiences with that journal where this guy would be in class looking at it, but over the actual textbook and like the teacher would look around and he would pull the journal upwards so that everyone in the class would see it but the teacher never saw it.... Some of [the girls] would laugh some of them would get pissed off. Some of the men would never participate as well.

Participants shared stories of both being exposed to pornography, and exposing others and sharing pornographic images as part of their sexual development.

Unwanted exposure. Other participants described unwanted or negative exposure to commercial sex, but were more ambivalent within their narratives. These narratives emphasized the ubiquity of commercial sex, and finding access to porn and sex buying despite not having been searching for it. For one participant, it was only some of content that he found aversive. He described finding a stack of pornographic playing cards at a public pool, describing “They were kind of disgusting at first. Like, I remember just going through them and tossing out many of them and just keeping the ones I liked which were the ones that I thought were not so disgusting.” For this research participant, the pornography itself was not unwanted, but rather particular images within the pornography. Another participant offered his story as an adult encountering unwanted pornography,

I had to go talk to my manager because I did a search for something and I had to go talk to him and say, “Dude. This just came up on my computer because I did this search please don’t fire me.”

Other participants echoed similar sentiments regarding their difficulty in avoiding pornography within the present online landscape. One explained, “You don’t have to access it. You can even just type in one thing and stuff just pops up. You don’t even mean to do it.” For these men, it was the timing of the pornography that was unwanted, rather than the pornography itself.

Prostitution was also regarded similarly for some participants, as something that was initially or partially undesired. As one participant recalled,

For me it was always alcohol based. I was overseas the first time it happened and I was just trying to get back to my hotel room—I was teaching in a foreign country—and a woman ran out and grabbed me and I was just trying to go to my room and go to sleep. And I'm like “no no no I won't do this.” But I was drunk and kind of just went with it.

The participant recalled being hesitant and unwilling to engage in sex buying, though he later described seeking it out during other episodes of drinking. Another participant recalled being abroad and encountering women in prostitution. He stated,

Honestly right there around the army bases, that's all it is, Juicy girls... you go in [a bar] and you say no to one girl, you know the next one is going to come up... So I went to places where they weren't there, I didn't want to be harassed.

The participant defined the term “Juicy Girls” as local vernacular referring to women who sold sex at bars around the military base and were presumed to be trafficked from neighboring countries. For this participant, the presence of prostituted women at bars was unwanted due to their continued “harassment” of him with offers to buy sex.

Commercial sex as ubiquitous. Many participants reported stories of encountering pornography in unexpected ways. The participant quoted above ran across pornography at a public pool, another participant described the following scenario, “I remember one morning before school, we were waiting for the bus. It was a real wooded area and someone had gone back into the woods and found where somebody'd dumped a whole stash of pornographic magazines.” Other participants described finding their father's pornography, and being given pornography at a young age:

I was like kind of 11 or 12 and actually showing interest in girls... I remember with my dad he got me a subscription to playboy. I didn't really have a conversation with my mom at that point, he kind of handled most of that... he told me he was going to get it, and showed me where his other collection was. He said, “put it back when you are done.”

Pornography for these participants was characterized as ubiquitous, and accessible even when one wasn't intentionally seeking to access pornography.

For men with experience in the armed forces, the markets for sex buying were seen as ubiquitous and were closely associated with military bases. As one participant expressed “Yeah the base I was at—pretty much all the bars right around there—90% of them had Juicy Girls.” Other men described accessing sex buying online, and how those markets worked for them. One participant recalled, “Someone at the army base in the city mentioned a website and so I looked that up. Found out that that was a lot easier than trolling craigslist.” For the men in the study, there was ample access to sex buying online and in street prostitution. Communication between men about sex buying created a higher level of convenience and further normalized the commercial sex industry.

Normalized. Participants described the manner in which the commercial sex industry was viewed as a normative part of their sexual experience. As one participant stated about his sex buying, “It felt normal... yeah I’m not going to lie—I was still in basic army mindset of ‘Who gives a flying fuck? If she’s selling she’s selling.’ And that’s basically how I thought.” The only information the participant felt was necessary in deciding whether to buy sex was whether it was for sale. Participants in this study echoed that sentiment, noting the manner in which accessing the commercial sex industry was a normalized practice in their experience as men.

When men discussed the commercial sex industry as a normalized practice, the tertiary themes that flowed from the data were Male Sexual Development, Social Sanctioning, and Social Pressure. The theme of Male Sexual Development was comprised of narratives in which men described how the commercial sex industry was viewed as an integral part of young boys,

and men's, sexual development. Social Sanctioning contained narratives of how participants received messages from family, friends, and society that both the use of pornography and sex buying were expected and acceptable for men. Finally, within the tertiary theme of Social Pressure were narratives of social pressure to engage in the commercial sex industry

Male sexual development. Some participants described pornography use as a part of normal male sexual development. When one participant was asked about his initial use of pornography, he shared, "You know it would really have to go back to when we were 13 or 14 years old looking at my neighbors' mothers artbook of nude pictures." When asked why he sought out and utilized her art books as pornography he replied, "You know boys experiment and when you get to be 13, or 14, or 15 years old you begin to notice things in the opposite sex and its attractive to you." Thus, his sexual development in his youth was offered as the impetus for utilizing art as his first foray into "experimenting" with pornography. Another participant discussed a memory of his sexual development, highlighting his understanding of his mother's feelings regarding pornography:

She just accepted it of my dad. Like, she didn't like it but it was better than him cheating or something, or she just accepts it as something that all men do. And then also having a teenage son, something along the same lines. It's something she expects all men to do. And hitting that puberty, and having that sex drive, she expected the same of me.

Within participants' narrative, the use of pornography was seen as a component of a male's sexual development.

The sexual development occurring in adulthood was also connected to pornography by participants. As one participant stated, he viewed pornography "to see what kind of sex I wanted." This participant described how he utilized pornography to introduce new sexual activities into his partnership. He stated, "I tried to use pornography into the marriage to see if I could get her to do more sexual acts, you know? Oral sex and stuff. She didn't want to look at

it.” Another participant stated that his wife initiated a discussion about integrating pornography use into their sexual lives. He shared,

I think she really thinks porn is just something that supposed to, that it's more of a dialogue. It's more of a scenario. You do stuff, and then you get into it. I don't know what she thinks of it I just know she has never seen it.

Participants shared that their sexual development within partnerships could be facilitated through integrating acts seen in pornography or presenting pornographic images to their sexual partners.

Participants also shared their thoughts on the manner in which sex buying was viewed as an avenue to access normal sexual development. As one participant stated, “I felt like I had to do that because that was the only way I could get even close to a naked woman because I could never think of doing anything related to girls that I knew.” He went on to say:

I was terrified of girls in school, but I was really attracted to them. So in my mind it was the only way of seeing what are women all about without kind of facing these terrifying beautiful women in my school.

This participant made the association in his youth that men were supposed to learn about sex and women's bodies through accessing commercial sex prior to having intimate relationships with female peers. Another participant recalled

I think at that point [I felt], ‘I haven't had sex, I've got the means, the money, let's just do it, let's just get this done.’ I was 24 and I didn't want to internally be carrying that around anymore.

Purchasing sex was a part of accessing a perceived milestone in the participant's sexual development and losing his virginity. Participants offered narratives in which porn and the purchasing of sex were presented to them, and accessed by them, as a normalized part of their sexual developmental process.

Social sanctioning. Participants shared the manner in which the commercial sex industry was normalized through the practice of social sanctioning. As one participant from the focus group stated about his experience of porn,

I would 100% agree with the pornography thing. That that is through and through society from when I was a kid until now. I mean everybody does it, everybody is a part of it, everybody enjoys it, everybody watches it. You know?

All but one participant described pornography use during their sexual development in their youth, with many participants sharing stories in which it was given or shown to them by others.

Social norm setting for sex buying also came from a variety of groups and individuals in the participants' lives. For example, the socially normative practice of buying sex at one participants' military base was described as more compelling than mandated military educational programs regarding sex trafficking. He went on to describe the norms of his army base:

No one got anything else against [buying sex]. Especially when I went overseas. It was rampant. Don't get me wrong, there was human trafficking and prostitution classes... but at the same point it was still just literally rampant throughout there... No one gave a shit.

Other participants described how their partners contributed to decision making when it came to purchasing sex. One man disclosed that after his wife and he no longer were having sex, his wife said, "I don't know that I see the harm in that... You know a massage with slightly more."

Another relayed his wife's reaction after he was caught buying sex, "My wife and I communicate a lot and have a, stuff like that is permitted which is why she didn't leave me." A social norm was agreed upon within relationships for some participants, whilst others derived sex buying social norms from male peer groups.

Several men also stated that female peer groups also helped in creating social norms that sanctioned and legitimized sex buying. One man stated that his female peer responded to his admission of being jailed for sex buying by replying, "I can't even believe that prostitution—that they make such a big deal out of it... if I was a guy I wouldn't have any problem, I would probably do the same thing." Many participants included descriptions of social sanctioning within their narratives of purchasing sex.

The social narratives regarding the women that were selling sex were equally important in the participants' discussions of sex buying. One man explained why sex buying aligned with his values by describing how inappropriate he felt it would be to tell a "prostitute" that she should not be engaging in this behavior:

If I go to someone and she goes "this is what I do, I don't have anyone controlling me. I choose to do this. What business is it of yours?" Isn't it wrong for me to say, "cuz I know what's best for you and I know you really don't want to do this so we're just going to make this through, we are going to take this off the table"? Isn't that in itself anti-feminist, in a way?

Feminism and a woman's right to choose for this participant were offered as contexts which contributed to an overall sense of the socially sanctioned and normalized practice of sex purchasing. Another man described his presuppositions regarding the attitudes of women in prostitution. He explained, "I thought they were doing that because they wanted to. Because that was an easier way to make money than to go be a waitress or something else." For these men, social understandings of women autonomously and freely choosing to sell sex, and their right to do so, was an integral part of their sex buying narrative.

Social pressure. Some participants reported that sex buying social norms went beyond mere social acceptance, and into social pressures to engage in sex buying practices. One man recounted his experience of being in the armed forces, and described the conversations regarding sex buying:

You hear the stories from the old guys that have been there many times and have done it many times and it becomes this glorified thing where if you're not doing it then you're not part of the cool group. It's like "oh man, well why aren't you? Like what's your problem?"

Another participant recounted the manner in which peer pressure shaped his first time attempting to purchase sex:

When I got with my friends, I still never thought like that. Then when they brought it up, I even said, "I have friends that will come and do this for us so that we don't even have to

pay for it.” But they still insisted on doing it, and I was there, and I was with them. It’s like, “let’s go ahead.” You know, “I’ll pitch in on it.”

Participants described social expectations for them to participate in sex buying in order to be associated with their all-male peer groups.

Offering a rationale. Participants shared multiple perspectives on why they, and other men, purchased sex. Within these explanations, participants often would contrast their own personal experiences with their beliefs as to why other men purchased sex. Furthermore, some men offered their personal insights into why these explanations were important within their development as sex buyers. As one participant stated,

You had to deny it, or you had to self-deny it, you had to dress it up or sugarcoat it, or “but this” or “because of this” or put any other things around it. Because once, if you really say it straightforwardly, like this is what I’m doing, then you have to actually stop and say “well what the fuck.” And that’s where you stop doing it, I guess for me. I stopped doing it.

Another participant shared his experience of masturbating to pornography,

I think a lot of people—a lot of guys—that are open about their pornography usage, from my experience, are kind of in denial. Or they don’t really express why they are actually doing it, they are just like “oh hot women.” But what is it really filling the void for? For me, just looking back it, it was definitely [that] there were a lot of things lacking in my life.

Thus, for some participants the process of creating explanations and rationale for why they purchased sex was perceived as a process of denial, and a manner of circumventing the nature of purchasing sex. However, for other men, the explanations were personal understandings that they felt offered insight into why they, and other men, engaged with the commercial sex industry.

Within the narratives that men offered to define their engagement with the commercial sex industry, the Tertiary themes of Social Upbringing, Biological Impulses, Maximizing Sexual Gratification, Avoidance of Rejection, and Avoidance of Emotion emerged. The tertiary themes

differed in the type of meaning that was utilized to shape the participants' perception of their use of the commercial sex industry. However, they all had a similar and important thread of attempting to make meaning and offer explanations for why these behaviors emerged in their lives, and in the lives of other men.

Social upbringing. Participants offered narratives for how their socialization affected their decision making around purchasing sex. The narratives from participants emphasizing the social factors that influenced sex buying were different from the subjective experience that participants shared in other sections of this data set, as Social Upbringing contained general ideas that were not specific to them personally but rather focused on men in general. As one participant stated,

I think a lot of it goes into how men are accustomed and groomed to think about sex a lot—In the media and then our households—that men just need to be the ones having sex and if you don't have a partner to do that then like you just buy it, I think. I feel like men are a lot less emotionally tied, at least from my experience. So buying sex is an easy way to do that without having to love someone.

Another participant stated,

Men are more likely to be the “I want to hit it and quit it.” The sexual conquest, the checking the box to say “I did this,” or “I got laid tonight,” or “I got my dick sucked tonight,” or “I did some really freaky crazy shit.” Men are more likely, raised wise, thinking wise, group thinking wise, to be like “hey let's go knock one out and be done.” They're more geared towards thinking like that than women.

Participants emphasized the way in which Social Upbringing was connected to the commercial sex industry due to the larger social pressures men faced in society.

Biological impulses. Participants relayed stories about the perceived influence of testosterone, both natural and due to medical concerns, on their use of commercial sex. One participant who had a health condition that was managed through testosterone injections stated:

It was to the point where I would be talking about stock investment to my brother, and he would be wondering what the Hell I was doing, cuz I was looking at porn while I'm talking to him. It became, absolutely obsessive. Beyond my control. I was on five

milligrams and voluntarily lowered it to four, and had been on that for two weeks, cuz it's a weekly shot, before they did the test. Then they did the test and it was three times what it should have been.

This participant associated his compulsive use of pornography with the poor titration of testosterone he was receiving for a pituitary gland condition. He went on to say "Which is not an excuse by the way... I tried to stop seeing women, and I just couldn't do it. Probably a large part of it was that unexplained testosterone response I was getting." For some participants, heightened levels of testosterone were associated with how they explained their sex buying behavior, and they emphasized that these were not "excuses" for their behavior.

Other participants discussed the use of pornography with normal testosterone development and natural changes. As one participant expressed about his pornography use when he was younger, "Over the years it's changed, when you're a teenager I think you have so much energy and testosterone whatever you want to call it, that you're trying to find every way to burn it off." He also shared that he expected his pornography use to decrease with age by stating, "I think, to be honest as you get older the reverse happens. If it didn't come up it wouldn't really be an issue." Testosterone and hormonal changes were seen by participants as part of the reason for why men utilized the commercial sex industry.

Maximizing sexual gratification. Participants stated that their perceived need for sexual gratification was a likely reason for their engagement with commercial sex. A participant described this pursuit of sexual gratification through pornography as follows, "Pornography now is more of a sexual, completely carnal need, or ambition, pursuit." Another participant, when asked how prostitution and masturbation differed for him in regard to sexual gratification, reported, "it's something more pleasurable than masturbation and being able to just, get what I want out of it and be done." For these participants, accessing and increasing sexual gratification was the primary purpose of engaging with the commercial sex industry.

Notably, one participant described his perception of how men and women accessed their sexual gratification through different means. He described “pick up culture” as an avenue for women to maximize their sexual gratification as follows,

I feel because there is a feeling that men need to have sex all the time, same with women... it's totally normal to go pick up someone at a bar and have sex with them the night you meet them. I think that's the same thing. The thing with prostitution is it gets, that issue, gets embedded with gender power differentials and gender dynamics, and patriarchy, that kind of shapes it.

The sexual convenience that research participants described as being accessed through prostitution was also attributed to women by this participant, though social norms required a different access point. Sexual gratification was an important explanation for some of the participants when they attempted to describe why they, and other men, purchased sex.

Avoidance of rejection. Participants offered narratives of avoiding rejection when they offered explanations regarding the reasons for purchasing sex. As one participant described it, “I didn’t feel like going out and trying to chase down something that I may or may not get, so I decided to go out and get the guaranteed. Another participant described his more complex relationship with rejection as follows,

You know I’d had a lot of rejection when it came to relationships, and wanting to build relationships, and I found that it was easier to “oh if I give you money then you’ll spend an allotted amount of time.”

Another participant described what he would tell himself when he was still purchasing sex, “I’m tired of fucking around the bars or whatever. I’m tired of dealing with idiots here and there I’m just going to find one and get what I want and be done.” Navigating rejection and facilitating the participant’s ability to access sexual gratification were intertwined in ultimately choosing sex buying over going to bars.

Avoidance of emotion. Emotionally unattached sex was another explanation offered by men when discussing their personal understandings of why they purchased sex. A participant

offered the normative frame of thought as “you don’t pay her to have sex with you, you pay her to leave afterwards.” As one man explained his experience,

If I get the feeling and went to buy sex, and then after this sex, I just go back to whatever I was supposed to do next. You know. I don’t really think about whether it makes me happy or sad, I don’t think about that.

He discussed later evaluating this emotionally unattached experience, and described the following: “I get the impulse sometimes because I, at that time, maybe I feel lonely, I have nothing to do at that time. I think that’s my personal reason.” The act of purchasing sex was part of compartmentalizing the participant’s emotional experience in the moment and returning to his regular routine. Other men explored their feelings regarding utilizing this fantasy as a response to stressful relationship situations, and wishing to access “easy” sex:

It was more about me being done with [girlfriends] and just like “you know what, I’m done! I don’t want to be with you anymore, I’m going to go get myself an easy nut and then go home.” ...It was just the fact that being with said girl was difficult you know. I was getting tired of her, getting tired of being with her and everything else and I just didn’t want to go to her that night but I still wanted to have sex so I just called a professional.

For these men, the lure of the commercial sex industry was the promise of uncomplicated sex and a way of having sexual gratification in an emotionally detached way.

Identity and commercial sex. Participants recounted narratives of their development into sex buyers and the changes they underwent. For some participants, this process was a clear and they had insight into their process. However, others were more similar to the following participant’s analysis, “Most of us said we would never [buy sex] but then it happens... How can you pre-identify the symptoms within yourself to say that you would go and do something like that?” The theme of Identity and Commercial Sex captures the stories that men told as they made sense of their developmental trajectories from being non-buyers to sex buyers, and how they made sense of these changes.

There were two tertiary themes that flowed from this data set: Buyer Proficiency and Navigating Moral Dilemmas. Buyer Proficiency encapsulated the narratives that discussed personal developments as a buyer through gaining insider knowledge and greater ease in being a sex buyer. The narratives of men attempting to understand their personal values in contrast with their sex buying and pornography use were captured in the tertiary theme of Navigating Moral Dilemmas.

Buyer proficiency. Within the stories of the participants, there was a general theme of developing knowledge and proficiency when it came to the commercial sex industry. Participants reported learning to navigate the world of sex buying. They described unique, developmental processes from their first purchase onward as they continued to purchase sex, and develop an identity as sex buyers.

The first purchase was a significant experience for the participants who described their sex buying practices. For some it was a thought out and planned event. One participant described, “Obviously here you’re feeling a little excited, because you’re going to hopefully have a sexual experience, but also, I was just really nervous and apprehensive about the idea. I felt like it was the wrong thing to do.” Some participants discussed having ambivalence regarding their decision to buy sex due to feeling it was wrong, while others discussed it as being dangerous rather than wrong. As one participant stated,

It was a lot of anxiety, it was like “oh is this for real. Are they just going to show up and take my money and run and that—and what’s going to happen then?” And like “well I can’t call the police.” And “what if it is the police that show up?” I didn’t know, but there was something about wanting to take the risk.

For both participants, the anticipation and planning for their initial sex buying experience was part of their entry into the world of being buyers.

This initial point of entry into the world of sex buying was described by participants as significant because of its impact on their sexual development. One participant stated,

I don't want to say regret, but it was more like—you know, it was what it was. There wasn't really any going back to a time before. You know? You can't undo it. I didn't think about it too much more.

From the initial purchase forward, participants described sex buying as being part of their sexual development impacting practices and preferences over time.

One form of fluency in sex buying described by the participants was the processes of acquiring knowledge which facilitated accessing the type of sex they wished to purchase. The participant that had experience in an army base abroad described learning how to purchase sex while avoiding particular sex workers. He shared, “there were certain clubs you could go to that didn't deal with Juicy Girls. They were literally just hookers. So, they were brothels, so to speak—and that's where you would go.” Another form of fluency was garnering knowledge about the administrative and scheduling aspects of sex buying. One participant illustrated: “I knew that people operate on schedules, so if you haven't talked to somebody by a certain time you're not going to talk to them that day.” A further form of development described by participants was in managing their emotional presentation as buyers toward the women in order to illicit a preferred response and outcome. As one participant described:

The first time it happened I was very nervous about it, and they could tell so they were kind of gentler to me when it happened. So I learned also how to use that, so sometimes I would put on a kind of confident attitude but at the same time, other times I would intentionally put this kind of face of being kind of insecure or nervous just to facilitate the dialogue with them.

Participants reported developing specific methods of engaging with the women they were purchasing sex from in order to illicit preferred responses or enactments of their desired fantasies.

Emotional numbing and denial were also discussed as emotional responses that occurred for participants in this study in gaining proficiency at sex buying. One participant stated that, “the reservations I had about it kind of dwindled down each time. I started numbing to it.”

Another participant described it in greater detail stating,

First few times I was scared shitless because I didn’t know what they were going to want, what they were going to do, whether they were going to fucking con me or actually try and rob me... Then after a while I stopped caring about that and realized, “hey you know—they’re trying to make money and I’m trying to have fun.” Just went from there.

Participants described these decreases in stress and the emotional numbing as part of developing a proficiency and a sense of comfort in buying sex.

Navigating moral dilemmas. Participants’ descriptions of their development as they engaged with the commercial sex industry were also reflective of personal ideological preferences and their attempts to being true to these ideals. For one participant, his desire to avoid women that were not working independently led him to avoid certain online advertisements. He described,

After a while you start realizing that there are networks on these things. So you start realizing that a certain kind of ad means a certain kind of agency. Or is it more like a smaller scale kind of thing? Or is it a huge brothel? I was always very uncomfortable when I realized that there was some kind of larger agency behind it.

The reason this participant gave for avoiding large agencies was that “you always have this kind of utopian idea that these are women that are working totally independently.” Another man described the opposite process with the same goal in mind of avoiding exploitation. He shared,

The majority of people that I saw, especially for the first 10 years was through an agency, but I didn’t really think of that in terms of pimps and prostitutes. I mean there was a woman that ran the agency and there were these girls that worked for her. And so I felt “hey nobody is getting hurt.”

This man elaborated further by saying, “I’ve never picked anybody off the street... it was picking up people online that—as far as I know—they were just trying to make ends meet. They

don't have any sort of management or a pimp.” Both participants sought to avoid perceived exploitation within their sex buying practices. Participants' descriptions of how they navigated the world of commercial sex was a mixture of their perceptions of women in prostitution and their personal ideological preferences.

Participants offered stories about how they behaved within their sex buying practices and how it reflected personal views of themselves as “nice” buyers. A participant discussed how he regarded women in prostitution. He shared,

I think [with] total admiration in many ways. I think I never had any negative feelings towards them, I think that there was never a time that I disrespected them overtly, or [told] them any rude things... I never really cared how they treated me in many ways, I always tried to put a mask of kind of gentleness or kindness or something.

Another buyer compared his dynamic with the women he was buying sex from to his relationship with professional service providers such as massage therapists. He explained, “You treat them with respect—but I am still the customer. And like, that dynamic... Say I was going to a masseuse—it's the closest thing I can connect it to.” Another participant referenced other men who purchased sex in order to better define his own sex buying identity as “decent” and “nice.” He explained, “in talking with the other two prostitutes that I had been with—and this may have been them talking me up—it seemed like I was actually a relatively decent nice person as opposed to some of the people they see.” Information about sex buyers' identities as “good” buyers and their self-perceptions and ideologies as men were embedded within their narratives about interacting with women in prostitution.

Purchasing a fantasy. Participants described the manner in which purchasing particular fantasies was an important aspect of their engagement with sex buying. In some instances, it allowed them to access certain aspects of their identities as men. As one participant expressed, “When I would buy sex there would be the artificial build up because I would be treated the way

I saw a man was to be treated, you know. Attention was paid to me, respect.” For other participants, their sex buying was connected to a fetish or a desire to engage in particular sexual acts. However, men also discussed the manner in which their fantasies were disrupted by their own inner process and the actions of the women from whom they purchased sex.

The tertiary themes that emerged within the larger narrative of fantasies were as follows: Dating and Virility, Emotional Intimacy, Fetishism, and Pulling Down the Veil. The data on fantasies centered on different erotic and emotional desires that men wished to access through sex buying. These included being perceived as a virile man, which included the notion that women would wish to date them. Participants also offered narratives of fantasizing about particular types of emotional intimacy that they could access through paying for women to role-play these desires. Participants also described fetishizing women of different ethnic origins, as well as women who were underage. Finally, as part of the process of discussing fantasies, men also shared the significance of moments in which the fantasy was disrupted and their sex buying practices were seen as purely transactional.

Dating and virility. Participants described the manner in which they purchased sex as a way of accessing their personal ideals of masculine desirability and virility. One participant described how sex buying reinforced his sense that he had an increased ability to sexually arouse a woman and personally bring her to orgasm. As he stated, “I think part of it really was can I really still satisfy a woman. I didn’t go into it just to get sex, I wanted to satisfy a woman. If it was just sex then it was unsatisfactory.” This same participant had stated, “The role of the man in marriage or the relationship was always to satisfy the wife or the girlfriend, first and foremost sexually.” Thus, women in prostitution were sought by participants in order to reinforce their personal fantasies that connected back to their ideals of masculinity.

For some participants, the idea of “dating” women in prostitution and meeting their needs as they might a romantic partner were important to their experience as buyers. As one man described, “There was some that I would go out to meals with or movies with and I would pay for the movies and the entire date—I wouldn’t necessarily pay for their time.” He went on to describe one woman in particular: “She would hang out, and so it felt marginally closer to real in that, there were times when she would call me when she would need help with a phone bill, or this or that.” Another participant described attempting to have an exclusive relationship with a woman who sold him sex; he stated, “my plan was to have a [relationship between] one girlfriend and boyfriend so I don’t have to buy sex anymore, and then it looked like she didn’t want to do that.” This participant shared his hope that he could manifest an experience of a long-term relationship through sex buying.

Some participants shared that the illusion of dating served as motivation for sex buying behaviors, despite an acknowledgement that it was only role-playing “dating.” One participant described his personal fantasy, in which a woman in prostitution would see him as “this great man type person, [and] then they’ll want to date.” He expressed,

I don’t know if I had ever fully thought it through. It never ever came to fruition, but I never truly thought it through because I’m sure if I ever was in that situation I would be like “oh well now, we’re dating so you’re not going to be a prostitute anymore?” That’s probably not going to work out real well.

For participants, accessing their desired ideal of being in a relationship was role played through sex buying fantasies in which they could pretend that they were approximating relationships with women in prostitution.

Emotional intimacy. Emotional intimacy with a partner arose as a theme in participants’ fantasies regarding the women they purchased sex from. One participant explained,

You can’t tell your wife something like this but there was one girl I saw quite a bit, she was very sensual in her responses, and sometimes when we would get done she would

just lay next to me and put her arms around me and I felt like I was having more of a relationship with her than I did at home.

Another participant stated, “My experiences with prostitution over the years was not even so much about the sex it was about the kind of experience, of another person being there.” The participants in this research that reported seeking intimacy in their sex buying behaviors described their motivation for purchasing sex as stemming in part, from a desire for intimacy that seemed lacking in their personal lives. One participant emphasized the way in which sex buying was not an access point to intimacy, despite offering some connection. He stated “Yeah you still have that feeling for them, that connection. But it’s not like the one with the girl I was seeing before. It’s not the same... The difference because I know them.” He went on to state,

It is different. Like the girl that was living with me, it was different because we spent time together, we cooked together, we went shopping together, all those kinds of stuff. It’s not the same. It can’t be the same.

Participants differed on their definitions of emotional intimacy, however participants emphasized that there were important differences in the fantasy of Emotional Intimacy accessed through sex buying, and the type of emotional closeness that could be accessed in a relationship.

Fetishism. Participants described seeking to fulfill fantasies of exotic experiences and fetishes through sex-buying. Participants often sought this out through purchasing sex from women of color or from racial/cultural origins different from their own. In this study these men were referring primarily to women from the Asian continent when discussing these experiences. One man described his father and his father’s friends sharing in this fantasy:

Some of the dads—one guys dad—he was in Japan in the Navy. And one of the cruises that went to Japan—he was aboard the carrier as a parachute rigger. And he had rented a hotel room with some Japanese—I don’t think they were Geishas, kind of like that... Of course, some of the fathers wanted to know what it was like to have sex with an Asian woman.

Narratives like this one were common in stories provided by participants with connections to, or experiences with, the armed forces. Participants described other fantasies regarding fetishes or exotic experiences, including one man who attempted to purchase sex from a mother and daughter: “I purchased it from a mother and daughter... well I kind of think it was staged. We started doing things and almost immediately her daughter’s boyfriend slash pimp walks in from the door and said, ‘this ain’t happening.’” Some of the participants shared an awareness that sex buying situations were potentially contrived in order to meet buyer fantasies and expectations, and also shared that these contrived fantasies did not live up to their expectations. Nevertheless, they continued to seek out these fantasies regardless of these observations. Sexual fantasies which centered upon exoticism or fetishes—often regarding women of color or minors— were highlighted by participants when discussing their sex buying behaviors.

Pulling down the veil. Within discussions of fantasies and sex buying, participants reported that having the veil “pulled down” was a significant aspect of their overall experience when engaging in sex buying. One man recalled this happening during his first visit to a brothel. He shared,

The first time we went there we went to go into this room and then the door opened and one woman came out. And there was a guy sitting at the end of the bed tying up his shoes, like he was getting dressed, and kind of he looked at me. And I have that memory of that brief kind of eye contact with that guy—and he looked terrible. He looked totally miserable. It was kind of a sight—a look, saying “don’t look at me.” Angry, and ashamed, and pissed off, and sad, and just wanting to tie his shoes as fast as possible so he can get out of there.

Participants recounted moments in which their sex buying fantasies were interrupted, as well as subsequent personal responses to these experiences.

Participants described purchasing sex, and not having their fantasy experience enacted or met by the woman they were purchasing sex from. As one man stated, “I had some less enjoyable experiences, but it was mostly not getting what you paid for. You know it’s the whole

show up and getting down to business.” Another participant described having expectations that could not be met through his sex buying:

Still felt afterwards that whole emptiness... I didn't know if and when I would be seeing that person again. So there was that let down... I would think it through, or maybe overthink it, “well it probably wasn't necessarily that there was more to it it's just she's playing the part.” Which is fine, for that. I mean it is what it is.

Some participants described shock and disappointment when their sexual fantasies of women were disrupted by the reality of the commercial sex industry. One participant described being “traumatized” when he entered a strip club for the first time. He explained, “It was mainly their appearance. They were saggy, they were—I can't say how old exactly, but they all looked 40 and above.” Participants highlighted having their fantasies disrupted, or not met, as part of their narratives of purchasing sex.

Noticing or encountering the lived experience of the women in prostitution was highlighted as instrumental in disrupting participants' fantasies. One participant shared,

Sometimes you see this girl, they give you story and you feel sorry for them sometimes—about what's going on with their life at that time. Sometimes you see this girl—they have kid. Because of they have to do this, so they get into the drugs, they forget about their family.

Another participant described the diminishing returns of sex buying when his fantasy was disrupted after encountering the humanity of the woman he purchased sex from. He shared,

It was only physically exciting—there was no emotional fulfillment. When I left I would feel concerned about their welfare, concerned about how I had failed as a man, how I even got myself involved in something like this. Because I knew the end result would always be negative.

For some men, the mere act of knowing the women was enough to disrupt their fantasies. One man stated that going to a strip club was a “waste of money” because he knew the women were merely performing. He stated,

I saw them more as friends, kind of—friends with my girlfriend. But that also was kind of uncomfortable that they were there. I just feel like wasted a bunch of money... I never

thought of the girls inside, I just thought of ‘there’s naked women’ but I never thought of them as people that I would know. So I think that’s why my experience was different.

The fantasy of what women in the life were like was important for the men’s construction of a fantasy, and disruptions to that ideal caused the men to feel disappointed, guilty, and disinterested.

A large portion of participants discussed the manner in which money disrupted their enjoyment of sex buying. One man was able to elaborate and contrast his initial experience in which money was not discussed, with his second time purchasing sex in which it was:

The first time money wasn’t, like we knew before going into it what the deal was and I gave her the money afterwards. The second time it was the same situation but, part way into our time together I had just asked her to perform oral again, and she was like, “that’s going to be another \$20.” And I was like, “oh okay.” That was different. It kind of pulled down that veil that it was just two consenting adults to what it really was.

For some participants, the individual discussions of money were not as salient as the cumulative effect of adding up all of the transactions in seeking out their fantasies. One man described his feelings after purchasing sex as follows:

Just kind of a let down, almost kind of a depression. Just full on, “oh I just dropped \$200 and what else could I have done with those \$200.” And then there would be, “let’s count how many times over the years I’ve dropped this \$200 or more and where would I be at today if I was able to stack up all that money that I spent.”

For the participants, pursuing their fantasy experiences by purchasing sex was complicated by direct conversations about money during sex, as well as the cumulative impact of their awareness of repeatedly spending money to buy sex over time.

Thrill of planning. For many participants in this study, discussions of why they purchased sex included the narrative of having a sense of thrill and excitement from the planning and purchasing of sex, rather than the sexual intercourse itself. As one participant described, “it’s the same thrill or exhilaration that you have before a fight—not necessarily a fight in real life—but let’s say like a sporting combat event.” Many other participants equated this sense of

excitement to a “hunt.” As one participant stated “it was almost like the thrill of the hunt, in a way. I don’t know how else to describe it.” For participants, the excitement and thrill of purchasing sex was an integral aspect of their reasoning for continuing to purchase sex.

For many of the participants, the planning and discussions with the woman regarding the sex that would take place were more compelling than the sexual interactions themselves. As one stated, “It was more of the buildup—especially because lots of times if you were seeing somebody new, you didn’t really know who was going to show up. So there was kind of the excitement built in there.” Another participant shared,

It was never about sex really, it was about kind of a rush, like a thrill. The actual sex was always awful—it was terrible, like it was not real sex at all. And immediately afterwards it was like all downhill. So it was always about the planning beforehand and the walking up to it.

Many of the participants highlighted the excitement of planning with their reasons for continuing to return to the practice of buying sex.

Some participants associated this thrill that precipitated their sex buying with the concept of addiction. As one expressed:

I knew, there was something in me that knew. I knew it wasn’t right that they were underage—but I also had a feeling that I knew it was law enforcement. But yet there was that thrill of—inside of me, along with the addiction of—well what if? What if it all just works out?

This participant was responsive to a sense of personal excitement in risking legal consequences while purchasing sex from a minor. Other participants echoed this experience with similar stories. As one participant stated, “there were a lot of signs that that wasn’t going to go well, but I just did it anyways.” Thus, excitement and thrill related to a sense of risk were integral aspects of the stories some of the men who purchased sex, and their motivations for continuing to buy sex.

Dangers of commercial sex. Participants shared narratives of how engaging with the commercial sex industry could lead to negative side effects. As one participant stated, “I have sexual partners that help, or that I’m able to explore those feelings with in a more, in my eyes, in a more suitable nature. Just because I’ve seen pornography as something that’s not good for my mind.” Participants noted the manner in which engaging with the commercial sex industry was harmful to various aspects of their intrapersonal and interpersonal lives.

From the participants’ narratives regarding the Dangers of Commercial Sex emerged four tertiary themes: Habit Forming, Mentally Harmful, Cheating, and Ambivalence. Participants reported their experience of pornography and sex buying as dangerous due to their experience of these as being habit forming and possibly addictive. They also disclosed that the commercial sex industry was Mentally Harmful in its ability to create negative associations towards women, as well as “misshaping” men’s erotic desires. Participants also stated that the commercial sex industry was harmful to their relationships, as their partners viewed sex buying, and sometimes pornography, as Cheating. Finally, participants expressed Ambivalence around the commercial sex industry, as they continued to use it despite feeling it was harmful to them; other participants felt that pornography was not inherently harmful but that its harm was based on the manner in which it was used.

Habit forming. Participants discussed the manner in which the commercial sex industry was dangerous due to the ability for it to be habit forming. As one participant stated when recounting his arrest for sex buying, “At that time that it happened I was kind of in an addiction spiral.” Another participant expressed it as follows,

You’re trying to recapture something that you can’t recapture. It’s gone. You’re trying to get as close as you can but you can’t... whatever else that’s not good will probably come after that because each one is just trying to fill a hole from getting deeper.

The habit-forming nature of buying sex was connected to searching for something that it could not deliver, which in turn the participant connected to other possible addictions.

Participants also described addiction as a possible outcome of engagement with sex buying. One participant discussed his attempts at no longer buying sex. He shared, “It didn’t go well, because I was like, ‘oh well not tonight.’ But then a couple hours later, ‘Well I got the cash on me so let’s just do it. Let’s just do it.’ It was definitely an addiction.” The decisions this participant made to no longer engage in sex buying were difficult to enact. Another participant stated the following in regard to sex buying,

If you really want it, if the addiction really wants it it’s going to find a way to make it happen. So saying that I didn’t really have the money so I didn’t do it isn’t necessarily the full truth. I would have found some way. There would have been some bill that didn’t get paid.

Some participants utilized the label of addiction when describing the dangers they encountered in purchasing sex.

In discussing pornography, research participants stated that one of their concerns was its potential to become habit forming. As one participant expressed

There’s been times where I can masturbate without porn and other times where I just don’t feel like it... when I call it a habit that’s when they become kind of synonymous, like when you have to use porn to masturbate. That is when you start feeding those images that then are stuck with you.

One participant expressed how developing a dependence on pornography over time negatively impacted his emotional well-being. He explained,

If you watched it compulsively or because you don’t have anything else to do or because there is uncomfortableness or you’re trying to put dirt over other feelings then it becomes a habit that gets kind of embedded with your sexuality. And there’s where the images start coming up, it’s like any kind of addiction, then people can’t get aroused without evoking that image.

This participant utilized pornography as an emotional coping strategy. He suggested that over time, this practice developed into a dependency upon pornographic imagery in becoming aroused, which reinforced his habitual use of pornography in his sexual activities.

Mentally harmful. Participants spoke about the ways that their interactions with pornography shaped their sexual development, and the dangers that it posed in stymying aspects of their sexuality that they wished they could have explored differently. A participant reflected, “I think porn has only misshaped my sexual ideas, filled my head with images that I don’t need. And they have ended up being really hard to get out in many ways.” Another participant discussed his initial experience being exposed to pornography: “just starting to piece things all together, and seeing that that was a really strong milestone. The beginning of where things kind of went off the proper path.” Another participant stated that pornography was present during his sex life in undesired ways. He recalled,

We didn’t necessarily have the healthiest of sexual relationships because I kept thinking of porn sex and it had to be great each time and I was trying to make sure that she was enjoying it and I was enjoying it and there was a lot of thought getting put into making that happen.

Pornography shaped the sexual experiences of the participants, as they recalled ways in which they felt it had lead them off the path they felt they should be on, and also created false expectations for their sexual relationships.

Some participants discussed their personal feelings regarding the use of pornography and stated that part of its danger was in the emotional turmoil it caused them personally rather than relationally. One participant expressed when asked how he felt after using pornography,

Dirty. Like I’d done something I knew I shouldn’t do. That one more time I answered the call of something I didn’t want to answer. I didn’t really want to do it. I can’t explain to you what a barbed hook it puts in your flesh. It does something to a man who watches that, that even though you’re disgusted by it you’ll come back to it the next day, or a couple days later or something.

Other participants discussed their attitude towards pornography as being similar to the experience they had after engaging in sex buying. One participant explained, “It’s like the same reason I don’t talk about the prostitution thing. It’s just one of those things that’s uncomfortable to talk about and I’m a little ashamed that I engaged in that.” Shame with pornography use was related to the shame this participant experienced from being having also been sex buyer.

Cheating. Other participants reported that one of the dangers with the commercial sex industry was to their interpersonal relationships with romantic partners. As one participant stated,

After I [bought sex] I felt pretty horrible. I enjoyed it, but I felt horrible towards my girlfriend for having done that... Our relationship we had was very good—I thought. So I just felt very guilty about doing that.

The participant’s experience in buying sex was positive with the exception of having cheated on his girlfriend and the subsequent guilt he felt.

Participants also associated pornography with infidelity in certain instances. One participant discussed a conversation with his partner:

She felt a little bit disrespected, and like “you with me now what’cha doing watching porn?” And I was trying to explain “no it ain’t the same thing. I’m not cheating on you by watching porn.” But it was almost like that was the feeling that was coming across the table.

Another participant recalled an experience in which his mother came across his father’s pornography. He relayed the following story: “My dad went on a business trip, and my mom found my dad’s pornography. She hated it, obviously she fucking hated it because she was burning it up in the fireplace.” The commercial sex industry was thus seen by some participants as a contentious issue in some relationships, though this was not the case for all participants.

Ambivalence. When discussing the possible dangers in the use of the commercial sex industry, participants reported ambivalence regarding its dangers. Participants reported that they

experienced the commercial sex industry as bad, but also defended its overall use. As one participant stated when discussing porn,

I feel there is great potential to porn. I think that there are certain kinds of porn, I mean there is porn and there is *porn* if you know what I'm saying. I don't think it's necessarily how it is made but how it's watched, it can be great... But at the same time for me, my own personal experience with porn is that it's been more negative than positive in many ways.

Some participants offered ambivalent responses in considering the damages of the commercial sex industry, particularly with pornography. This ambivalence was usually stated in feeling that it had a negative effect on themselves but that it did not for other men.

Another expression of ambivalence for participants was the narratives of enjoying engaging with sectors of the commercial sex industry whilst expressing guilt and shame for doing so. As one participant described:

After the first time I felt guilty as shit the moment I walked through the door. Somehow that wore off enough for me to do it a second time... You know from the minute I walked out the door to the minute I walked in the door I felt guilty as shit—but I still went back and did it a third time. I can't tell you what that pull was, but, did I actively try and put something in place to stop? No—other than my guilt, I guess.

The emotions of shame and guilt were prevalent for many of the participants in this study, and highlighted the manner in which they felt drawn to the experience, despite struggling emotionally due to their continued use.

Transmission of Masculinity

Table 3

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Themes of Transmission of Masculinity

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Tertiary Theme
Transmission of Masculinity	Teachers of Masculinity	Media Mentors Role Models Anti-Role Models Social Cohorts Humor
	Fitting In	Gender Role Enactment Alcohol Sex and Sexualizing Women Pornography Strip Clubs Buying Sex
	Relational Disconnection	Women as Gatekeepers Lack of Masculine Attributes Lack of Resources

The theme of Transmission of Masculinity emerged as participants recounted narratives of fitting in, being left out, and making meaning out of the values in their social milieu. One man described his development as a man in reference to witnessing his male peers' masculine presentation. He stated, "The guys I lift weights with, work with—they're all your manly men kind of people. It shapes it I think—who I'm around and the types of conversations." The participant went on to describe how he was personally affected by these changes.

Sometimes I hate the parts that I've lost or given up. But then other times I feel like I'm the real—I'm a man now, kind of thing. So, it's like a trade-off, I feel like. I couldn't say if it's one way or the other. But I definitely regret a lot of things. I wish I was still a little more compassionate or a little more understanding than I used to be.

This participant's process of embodying more masculine ways of being included taking cues from behavior that was modeled within his all male peer groups. He further stated, "I think that's because men aren't nice guys, or super compassionate, and I feel like I used to be. I used

to be pathetic and stuff and now I kind of just let that part go.” For participants, the Transmission of Masculinity was a complex process that involved interpreting standards for male behavior and deciding to embody them or reject them based on their need for belonging and managing disconnection.

Transmission of Masculinity included secondary themes referred to as, Teachers of Masculinity, Fitting In, and Relational Disconnection. This data set described narratives of participants encountering many sources of information regarding masculinity. Participants’ narratives included stories of Teachers of Masculinity, which offered both models that participants viewed as positive and models which participants rejected. The secondary theme of Fitting In contained participants’ experiences of belonging which prompted participants to demonstrate certain behavioral masculinities in order to foster connection with family and friends. Additionally, participants also offered stories of Relational Disconnection which contained information about the way that masculinity was transmitted through rejection and feeling left out of particular groups.

Teachers of masculinity. Teachers of Masculinity described processes participants shared in their learning about who they wished to be as men. This theme highlighted the significant relationships and the influences that were present in their youth. For some participants, these influences were clear and easy to recount, for others they were obscured. One participant described a lack of insight as to how masculine aggression was transmitted to young men, recalling his neighborhood peers’ development into manhood. He stated,

The guy across the street, his dad was, I thought a good dad and he had him working with him and he did things for him. But he just turned out to be a real nasty disposition, he was cussing at his mom and stuff—and I know that wasn’t what he learned in his family. So you know, how do I know where that stuff came from?

For this participant, lessons about violent forms of masculinity did not seem to have a particular source, despite having multiple examples of these behaviors. Other participants described multiple sources when it came to learning about masculinity,

In my upbringing—so from my family or from my parents. You know, my extended family. In school, in media—you know, just in the TV shows that I watched. In reading. Just I guess my whole educational process, and the people that surrounded me.

Participants highlighted many sources of learning when considering the manner in which masculinity was transmitted to them in their upbringing, and in their adult lives.

Tertiary themes of Media, Mentors, Role Models, Anti-Role Models, Social Cohorts, Humor were included within Teachers of Masculinity. Participants expressed that the social influence of television, movies, and music influenced their personal views of masculinity. They further stated that adults offering guidance and support were an essential component in identifying personal paths towards masculinity. Adults modeling masculinity, both positively and negatively, shaped the perspectives of participants in regard to a man's role within their family and their community. Finally, research participants reported that humor was a tool for communicating information about sexuality and masculinity.

Media. Participants noted the importance of the media as a source of information regarding masculinity. One participant described how television personalities provided a cornerstone for his views of what men should be. When asked what it meant to be a man, he responded,

In terms of descriptive words: strong, supportive, in charge. Most of which—thinking back now—most of the ideas around that came from television and movies more than actual teaching. We saw a lot of movies with Clint Eastwood, James Bond or something. So the ideas really formed from there.

Television and movies were common places for participants to elicit models of masculinity that they idealized and attempted to live up to. When one man was asked for his conceptualization of

a man, he stated, “I just have a picture of a cowboy.” He elaborated further when asked where he drew his example, “Mine was not a lived experience. Mine was pretty much viewed for the most part on television, in books and stories and such. So, it’s that view—kind of the Roy Rogers, or the John Wayne type of view.”

Men’s sexuality was also described by participants when recounting lessons learned from the media. A participant recounted,

Almost as far back as I can remember, my parents would let me watch movies like *Beverly Hills Cops II*. There was a scene where they go into a strip club, and there’s nudity everywhere. Dad like tried—but didn’t really try very hard—to be the responsible parent and said, “don’t look” but we would watch other R rated movies too.

Participants described receiving “positive” messages about sex and sexuality, as well as viewing women as “entertainment” in movies, and also from music. One participant described his uncle’s room,

He was into rap. He would have posters on his wall and some of them would have half naked girls and when I would see him he’d be watching the music video for Rumpshaker—like, all the girls in bikinis.

This participant, described music and media as impactful in his understanding of sexuality and masculinity. Media was reported by participants as a conduit for receiving information regarding masculinity, sexuality, and how to embody these qualities

Mentors. Mentors were emphasized as an important aspect of learning about masculinity. Participants recalled encountering men and women who were instrumental in teaching positive forms of masculinity. As one participant described,

She would always talk about her dad, and how he never raised his voice. And tell us there is other guys out there that I could maybe look to that would be a better example than my dad. She knew that he wasn’t the best example.

This participant described how he was offered models of masculinity that were in contrast to the violent outbursts that his father exhibited in the home. Another participant positively recalled

the example offered by his teacher. He shared, “He really worked with kids. He really believed that they needed to have that moment of truth, where they needed to get over the embarrassment of shedding tears in public.” This participant recognized how his teacher’s mentorship helped young boys achieve emotional maturity. He continued by stating that the teacher would help “boys get into soap box derby” and other activities that were beneficial to them in their youth. Participants viewed these moments as important in shaping their views of who they wished to be as men.

Research participants emphasized how finding mentors in positions of employment and in tasks related to manual labor were personally significant in defining their well-being. One participant recalled an important mentor in his youth who gave him a job on his farm. He stated,

It basically started off as a way of making a little extra cash here and there, but he kind of guided me through a lot of things—the basics. I wouldn’t say the man stuff—but the basic ingenuity. I learned to do things with my hands physically, making fences, mending fences building things, construction of anything—that’s where I started at.

The participant emphasized that masculinity was not overtly referred to, nor was it the primary vehicle for the bond between he and his mentor. He stated,

It’s not like he was saying, “hey you’ve got to do this. This is what men are supposed to do.” It’s just like, “hey do you want to go do this,” and it was like “Sure.” ... Yeah don’t get me wrong it was quote unquote manly stuff.

This participant described how manual tasks acted as vehicles for transmission of masculinity within the context of the bond that he was forming with his employer. Thus, mentorship found within work and manual labor contexts were viewed as opportunities for models of masculinity to be transmitted through connection and support.

Role models. Research participants emphasized learning about masculinity indirectly from others, observing it in the actions and conversations that were happening around them. When asked about messages about being a man, one participant stated, “There was no real

discussion that I can remember about that. People just sort of did what they did. If maybe you were expected to use that as an example—even that wasn’t explicitly called out.” Participants identified models as individuals that served as examples of masculinity without directly discussing the inherent values they were transmitting.

Participants reported seeing adults enacting gender roles within their households, and how these informed their own understanding of masculinity. In some narratives, participants stated that their models ascribed to stereotypical gender roles,

My father was definitely the traditional primary provider. Though my mother did work, he was definitely the primary provider... my father would have definitely landed more on the man side than the “guy,” I didn’t ever see him being disrespectful towards women.

The participant’s father served as a model for what he perceived to be a man’s position in the household, and how they should treat women. Another participant described the manner in which his household blurred gender roles. He stated, “My parents kind of blurred those physical gender roles, my dad liked to cook and was always the one who cooked the turkey every Thanksgiving. And Christmas he would bake pie. He was good in the kitchen.” Examples of masculinity in the home were prevalent, whether they were stereotypical in nature, or if they challenged traditional gender roles.

Participants also relayed stories in which role models served to help them broaden their definitions of masculinity. One participant recounted learning about the difference between viewing women as “the mother of my children” and a “companion.” He recounted his experience of his female friends who served as models for these possibilities. He reported,

They would talk about their boyfriends back in whatever country, or they would have relationships there and talk about doing things. I just thought “oh you know that’s something I would like. I want something like that.” And that’s when I started leaning more towards needing a “companion” as opposed to a mother of children.

The participant's old notion of seeking a female partner shifted from "mother of my children" to a mutual relationship that centered on the value of companionship. Observing role models in their homes and communities was factored into learning and embodying masculinity for participants.

Anti-role models. Participants described a different type of learning that occurred through witnessing examples of damaging forms of masculinity that occurred in their lives. Examples of Anti-Role Models spanned many behaviors, but were most prominently featured in stories of child and domestic abuse. One participant stated,

He had a refrigerator fan belt that he had in the closet and he would welt your butt with it, for something as small as going two blocks away and riding a poster board down the hill. You know, I just grew up knowing that I didn't want to be like that, but, I didn't have a model of what really to be.

Another participant stated "I knew I didn't want to be like my dad towards my children or towards my wife. But that's a far cry from how you should behave because I had no model."

For participants recalling the messages they absorbed in their youth, witnessing violence was highlighted as a factor in deciding what types of masculinities they wished to move away from.

Participants relayed concerns that they would re-enact the behaviors that they saw modeled for them by the Anti-Role Models. As one described,

I think just seeing my dad raising his voice and being mean to my mom, and grabbing her and stuff—just some of the things he would say. It didn't make me want to do that to a woman, but in the back of my mind I'm always afraid that if I were to get married, maybe that would just come out somewhere—just randomly out of nowhere.

Other participants noted personal moments in which they found themselves re-enacting the behaviors previously associated with the Anti-Role Model. A participant stated,

He had a lot of masculine reactions that were not very healthy in many ways, outbursts of rage when he was confronted about particular things that were not really prompted at all. And I think that I inherited a bit of that as I grew up into my teens—18th birthday or so. That's when my relationship with my father kind of escalated into hostile ways, because I was acting that way too. And he was. So we started to clash a lot.

This participant voiced the manner in which he noticed himself enacting his father's behavior despite feeling negatively regarding the behavior.

Participants also shared wishing to distance themselves from men who expressed masculinity through violence in the home. One participant who grew up with domestic violence connected the violence he saw in his father to his use of alcohol. He described his father as follows,

You know he was from Alabama, and in the South, they drink whiskey like we drink water, and he was an alcoholic and he always had a level of alcohol in his body pretty much. He would sit with a glass at his desk and just sip it, and he was on the bitter edge of anger almost immediately.

The participant went on to reiterate wishing to distance himself from his father's behaviors, concluding "I would never do that," after offering examples of his father's behavior. Another participant offered the following insight into his father's lack of role models,

He would get angry for shit. He would blow off and get physical sometimes when I was a kid. But now he is old and chill and stuff. But yeah growing up I feel like he didn't know how to deal with being a dad because he never had one.

This participant experienced violence as a part of his childhood and as a part his primary relationship with his male parent figure, and connected his father's behavior to a lack of appropriate role models.

The final type of Anti-Role Model that was expressed by participants was the awkward and silenced parental figure that was unable to offer conversations about sex and sexuality. One participant described,

Well there's that awkward conversation where your super religious parents sit you down and then they say, "There's a car, and there's a pink car, and this is you and a woman." And they're really vague about everything because they don't want to talk about it, but they knew they had to.

Awkward conversations were offered by participants as an example of early modeling that did not translate well into having open conversations with partners. One participant stated, "The

whole Catholic upbringing, around ‘this is what the Bible says, and this is what has to be done.’ I mean that has affected my ability to communicate about sex with other people.” Another participant expressed difficulty in speaking to his own daughter do to previous examples set by parents,

Yeah, I feel that if we had talked about it more I would be more open to talking about it now. Obviously, as a teenager, not wanting to be having those discussions—but surprising enough I am in that situation right now with my own daughter. And I think, looking back I almost wish that he had had that discussion with me—even if I would have hated it at the time.

Participants reported that adults in their youth modeled behavior that they viewed as negative, silencing, or damaging, which facilitated a desire to move away some expressions of masculinity.

Social cohorts. Participants described learning about how to be a man through interaction with peers. As one participants expressed, “Yeah you get kind of ‘contaged.’ There’s a contagious experience of, if you see other people doing it and you have to do it as well.”

Participants recounted how social groups powerfully transmitted expectations of how they were to act as men in a manner that took primacy over alternative messages. One participant stated,

There was a human trafficking and prostitution class that we had, like, “hey some of these girls are being drug over here just for being sold as sex and everything else.” But at the same point it was still just literally rampant throughout there... Hell, I even taught the damn class—after a while of being there I ended up being one of the instructor. Still didn’t give a shit.

For the participant who chose to buy sex despite the class, the social norms set by his peers on the military base were more salient than the messages he was receiving, and teaching, regarding sex trafficking.

Learning about sex and sexuality through peers, during childhood and adolescence was discussed by participants. As one participant stated,

I think I learned about sex from my brother's friend growing up. Yeah, because he was a little bit older than me and he was the same age group with my brother. My sexual encounters I learned from him. He was really—the girls liked him. He could get any girl he wanted.

This participant described how his friends were an important source of information about sex and helped him to express and transmit social norms. He discussed, “You had to be a grown up to talk about this. You have to be grown up to talk about sex and you can't have sex, until you grow up. Until you get married.” Participants stated that this process of learning through peer relationships facilitated receiving information about masculinity and sexuality. As one participant described,

I think I learned a lot about—I mean I didn't learn in good ways—but there was a lot of sexual things happening with them. Not just sex but those were the guys that I learned how to smoke with, and I learned how to drink with, and all these things.

The participant's social group was a source of information that he could not access elsewhere. Thus, participants described how learning through their peer groups facilitated their sexual development as men.

Humor. The use of jokes and humor in discussing women, sexuality, and forms of masculinity offered a source of information that was internalized by participants. Participants reported that humor was utilized to characterize sex as an experience that was always positive. One participant reported, “There were never bad stories about it—like, at most, they were funny. If something weird happened it was funny. But it was never a bad experience in these stories.” For participants, humor served to normalize sexual situations that were experienced as embarrassing or emotionally difficult. One participant recounted an experience when he first attended a brothel with his friends, and a woman made a sexual advance toward him. He reported,

She came onto me and tried to grab my balls. I was so scared that I like—put my leg up, and I kind of kicked her—I didn't really kick her, but I kind of kicked her, I think... But

yeah everyone just started cracking up like crazy, and that story was like, “well I must be gay, because I don’t like women grabbing my balls.”

The participant’s experience was humiliating due to the fact that he was witnessed by his peers recoiling from sexual activity with the woman. The use of humor and homophobic remarks, however, served to alleviate the humiliation and facilitated his continued engagement with brothels. He stated, “But then when I went there—like two or three more times—that fear kind of washed over I think, and I was just getting back to the exhilaration, I think.” Participants described the manner in which humor facilitated navigating difficult sexual experiences, and the way in which masculinity was relayed through jokes and humorous anecdotes.

Participants also discussed the manner in which sex buying information was shared amongst men through the use of humor. One participant recounted his first experience of ever hearing about prostitution through his father’s use of a humorous anecdote. He reported,

My dad was in the navy, so he was gone six months at a time. At some point he had mentioned some of the guys on his boat – when they would dock into other countries – would go and pick up a hooker. I think I remember him telling a story about one of the guys getting someone that they thought was a woman but wasn’t, and they didn’t realize it until it was too late.

Another participant stated that he learned about how to find people in prostitution through a joke at his church. He reported,

I mean I didn’t even know how to find a prostitute. And the peculiar thing is, one church we went to, there was this guy that was this humorous little guy, and he says “well if you want to find a prostitute you just look on craigslist.” He was making a joke you know, and I went to look on craigslist and sure enough. Strangely enough it kind of started from that.

The participant’s engagement with sex buying was facilitated by a joke that made him aware of an easily accessible market for sex buying. Humor was reported as a component of normalizing and sharing sexual practices amongst men, without having to directly address the issues being discussed.

Interpersonal violence was normalized and enacted within participants' lives through the use of humor. One participant elaborated on this dynamic in describing his father's verbal abuse during his developmental years. He stated,

I mean he had his little pet sayings you know when he would come in, he would come home from work and you would be doing something and he would say "you guys don't have the brains to pour piss out of a boot if it had instructions on the toe and a tap on the heel." It's kind of funny when you think back on it, but it's not funny to a child... So, it was humor to him but it was also—it also got what he wanted. And you know today we laugh about those things but if I heard someone doing that to their own children I would be appalled.

Humor was utilized by this participant's father to enact behavior that the participant later recognized as abusive. Humor also helped this participant to make meaning of his experience with his father. In learning about masculinity, participants shared that humor was a significant element in learning and making meaning out of manhood.

Fitting in. Participants reported that part of their learning regarding masculinity took place through the process of fitting in and belonging. Participants expressed that a key component to the transmission of masculinity was the experience of belonging and connection. One participant stated, "The woodshops, the metal shops, building things, that was just fun for me. So, if people were willing to teach me, I was willing to learn. It was enjoyable." The participant's enjoyment of learning and connecting with teachers was important as he gained fluency in the masculine tasks that he was learning. Participants expressed that a sense of belonging was an essential component of learning about masculinity.

The participants that described the theme of Fitting In discussed the manner in which it arose in specific contexts. Participants described the need to embody masculine stereotypes in order to facilitate a sense of belonging amongst peers and family members. These narratives coalesced into the tertiary themes of Gender Role Enactment and Alcohol. Participants also shared experiences centering on sex and the commercial sex industry when discussing their

process of navigating social groups; these were split into the tertiary themes of Sex and Sexualizing Women, Pornography, Strip Clubs, and Buying Sex.

Gender role enactment. Participants discussed a sense of belonging which they credited to past personal portrayals and enactments of gender roles. For some participants, ascribing to gender roles was an overt process which they were cognizant of, for others it was an internally rewarding experience that also happened to gain them social approval. These distinctions were significant to certain participants. One man stated:

Don't get me wrong I still consider myself a quote unquote man's man but not because I am a big brute and everything else like that. It's just everyone comes to me for things, you know. I do the things that everyone else thinks are manly, and people come to me and ask me for things.

This participant made a distinction between striving for masculinity through traditional gender roles, and simply being viewed as masculine due to his hobbies and interests. The process of belonging was characterized as an outcome of his tendency to enjoy masculine hobbies. He stated, "When people start coming to me and say, 'Dude, you're awesome. You take care of this. Can you do this for me?' It just makes me feel like, 'Yeah, I kind of am.'" Many other participants reported the opposite experience of having masculinity clearly defined in their developmental process, and belonging as being predicated upon following and expressing certain gender roles.

Most participants were keenly aware of how social norms regarding gender pertained to their personal views of themselves as men. As one participant, born outside of the United States, expressed about his growing up, "I really think I did what I was supposed to do as a man at that time... Then the ladies they helped with my mom, and I helped with my dad do the man's stuff." When asked if there was anyone taking on the other gender's task he stated "No no no—we don't do that. They do the cooking the cleaning, the laundry." In enacting his expected gender

role, he stated. “I am confident that I fit the man—I mean the role of being a man.” For participants that were born in the United States, stories of belonging connected to western ideals of masculinity.

One man described masculinity as follows, “It’s sort of like the American dream. You grow up, you get a girl, you go to school, you’re permitted to mess up a little—you know, act wild—then you kind of buckle down.” Participants elaborated on specific tasks that encapsulated the concepts of the “wild” youth, and the older man who has “buckled” down. One man described how risk taking emphasized in achieving social status and a sense of belonging during his youth. He stated, “If you wouldn’t do this thing then you weren’t a man... It was always just pretty trivial stuff. We rode bikes a lot when I was younger, so if you wouldn’t ride down that steep hill.” Another participant expressed that in the military, the capacity to achieve a sense of belonging to the world of men was relegated only to particular positions:

We were the fighters—we were the ones that were actually out there doing things—not the cooks, not the Air Force, not the gun bunnies firing rounds from a mile away. We were the ones that were right there where the metal meets the meat. That was the only time I ever started thinking of myself as a man’s man.

The participants’ capacity to meet societal pressures in a manner which was culturally normative resulted in a sense of pride as they expressed their own masculinity.

Alcohol. Some participants referenced alcohol and bars when discussing how they learned about masculinity and fitting in. For one participant, it was framed as an early connection with his father:

I started playing darts when I was six years old. My father—I shouldn’t say was—is an alcoholic, but a recovering alcoholic. And for a long time—even when I was young—would be in bars, and he would take me with him. I would have my little Sprite with a little cherry in it, and I would go play darts.

For others, alcohol was part of socializing with male friend groups. One participant who tried alcohol with his sports team members stated, “I was never a part of that. Like, I think I drank

once when I was 16 or 15 with them, and then I never had any more drinks until I was like 18 or 19 years old.” For some participants, alcohol became an important aspect of every social engagement in their early adulthood. “I kind of liked to be the life of the party in those days, but I couldn’t be the life of the party unless I had half a cooler of beer in me.” Participants discussed alcohol as part of the social bonding that occurred with their all male peer groups, but also as a general factor in connecting and learning about masculinity.

Sex and sexualizing women. Men shared many stories about women’s bodies and sex when they were asked about masculinity, and many of their stories contained narratives of peer pressure, male bonding, and a sense of belonging. A participant recalled the moment when he realized made these connections for himself. He stated:

One of the leads—the people in charge—was a woman named Julie. And some of the guys were talking about—they thought she was cute. That’s the part where they wouldn’t say what they wanted to do, but they implied they wouldn’t have minded to sleep with her basically. And then they were talking about celebrities that they wanted to hook up with, and famous girls like Jessica Alba, and stuff like that. I couldn’t think of any of that, because I didn’t think about it. That was when I started thinking more about that, cuz that seemed to be something they talked about a lot—was women they thought were hot.

The realization that men often bonded through the sexualizing of women was noteworthy for this participant. Further, he felt “weird” due to his disinterest in participating in these conversations with his peers. Consequently, he cultivated a practice of “think[ing] about” women’s bodies in order to fit in. Participants discussed their need to talk about sex and prioritize it in their lives as a way of sharing space within their all male peer groups.

Participants discussed how societal pressure to join in sexualized conversations with other men was significant in shaping how they understood their own masculinity and sexuality. As one man expressed:

It’s easier to just talk about women in the way that my friends used to. Like, more objectifying them... so while we are talking I feel—I don’t want to say powerful—but I

feel like I'm able to contribute. Like I add value to conversations [laughs] which is terrible because the conversation is a shitty conversation, so adding value is not possible. But I feel like I do just because I'm able to share stories and talk to them.

Despite a sense of ambivalence regarding the sexualization of women by men, this participant engaged in this practice due to his desire to share and belong to his male peer group. Another participant discussed the content of these conversations, stating: "It wasn't really sharing information. Like, 'this is what happens.' It was, 'Dude this one girl sucked my dick so good!'" This participant distinguished an authentic sharing of information about sexuality from the customary conversations he participated in whose aim was specifically about sexualizing women and connecting with other men.

Participants highlighted that these types of conversations generally occurred in all male peer groups. As one man explained:

Yeah, I have some friends—sometimes that's all they want to talk about—is just women. And I'm comfortable with it now, but it's not something that I engage [with in] the conversation. Like, I start talking about school, and they're like, "Yeah there's this hot girl in my class" and then the conversation just kind of shifts to talking about girls in classes, and girls that we're seeing and stuff like that.

The participant described a recursive tendency for conversations in all male peer groups to center upon women's bodies and sex, despite efforts to initiate diverse conversation topics.

Participants felt pressured by the context of persistently sexualized conversations to be sexually active with women in order to belong to their all male peer groups. One man described his realization that he was not as sexually active as his male peers, "I was maybe like, 17 or 16 when I really was around my teammates and, I was like, 'Yeah, I'm weird because I haven't done anything like this, and everyone else seems to have.'" The participant's early understanding of his sexual development was that he was an outlier amongst his friends due to his perceived relative lack of sexual experiences. Another participant described his experience in the armed forces as follows:

I really didn't have any sexual encounters until I was in the Navy, and of course in the Navy you're around a bunch of guys and it's "sex this, sex that, sex this sex that." And so, you know part of being a man is to go out and get laid. That is probably where I became more active with having girlfriends and having relationships with them.

Though the participant continued to pursue monogamous relationships even within the Navy, he also connected his sexual development to the pressures of his all male peer group.

If participants were not sexually active, they reported that lying was expected and tolerated within their all male peer groups. One participant shared the following:

Oh, I would make up stories about blow jobs, or some quote-unquote random girl I found in a bar, because it was the thing to do. And I realized I was a virgin and I wasn't an idiot—I was 20 years old. What do you expect? I didn't know what I was doing—I didn't want to seem out of place and everything else. Self-conscious. So, I just made stories up—lied out of my ass. I'm pretty sure they knew it too.

Many participants described knowing that other men were lying when discussing stories about sex and sexuality but continuing with the pretense. As another man described, "Nobody had any real story. It's like these old teen movies they would make—that people would pretend. But you know nobody knows anything." The act of bonding with other men through discussions that centered upon sex with women and the sexualizing of women was described by participants as an important practice regardless of whether or not the stories and information described actual events that had transpired.

The socially comparative, semi-competitive, nature of sharing stories of sexual encounters were often described by participants when recounting experiences within their male peer groups. One participant described the practice of sharing sexual stories as a method of achieving an "alpha-male" status amongst the all-male peer groups. He described:

I wouldn't say competitive—but yeah, it was mostly competitive—because, it was never stated out like, "Oh I'm doing better than you," puff your chest up. But if you did something really cool it was "Oh fuck yeah! You the man! Holy shit!" So yeah it was competitive, but it was never like the puff up, "I'm better than you." It was like, "Oh my God! I can't believe you did that."

The participants described a desire to have stories in which they could “one up” each other in discussions about sexual prowess and their “conquests” of women. One man described sharing his first sexual encounter amongst his male peers:

I talked to a few friends about it. Just a little bit about who it was—not how it went—but just, who it was. And my friends would like jump in and be like, “Oh yeah?” And would try and one up me, kind of.

Other participants described similar dynamics in the sharing of sexual experiences and expecting to either be given social merit for them, or to have others share in fabricated, or possibly real, stories that would place them in the position of alpha male.

Participants reported a sense of accomplishment when they were able to access women’s sexuality and the ways that these experiences facilitated a sense of belonging. One man recalled his dad’s response to his sexual development, “After I got out of the Navy, I can remember my dad telling his friends, ‘Tom is getting more sex than all of us are.’ And he was proud about that.” Here, a sense of accomplishment was experienced not only by the participant himself, but also by people that felt a stake in his development as a man. Another participant expressed his feelings after his first sexual experience. He stated, “I felt like—normal. Like, ‘Oh, I can share now. Yes! This is cool!’ kind of thing. I felt like, finally. Like I was in the club. Yeah like, part of the club, I guess.” This participant’s first sexual encounter was an exciting experience due in part to its propensity to validate his sense of belonging in his all male peer groups.

Participants distinguished between their sense of belonging, and personal accomplishment achieved through accessing sex with a woman and their sense of personal masculinity. As one man expressed, “Basically, just proud to have gotten to that point with that girl... It felt like it was a goal, something I was trying to reach, but it doesn’t feel like that by doing it, it made me a man.” This participant clarified the difference between achieving a goal

associated with sexual development, which was connected to a sense of belonging, and his desire to fit in to the role of being masculine.

Pornography. Participants also described the role of pornography in the facilitation of their sharing space with other men. Men discussed utilizing pornography as a way of gaining favor in male peer groups. As one participant described, “I went and bragged, ‘Hey my dad got me a subscription to *Playboy*’ and if they came over, I’d show it off.” These experiences of sharing pornography were connected to a sense of personal pride and were generally connected to this participant’s understanding of masculinity. Another participant described this experience as follows:

From my experience pornography had a big thing with belonging because that’s what let my buddies and I bond. My buddy had this old VHS tape from his dad with all the classics. We would be over at his place and just put that in and that would be like our sixth grade, seventh grade type of thing. And he was cool because he had that. It was the classics, *Debbie Does Dallas*—the old school.

Access to pornography was a status symbol within participants’ friend groups and conceptualized as a way to facilitate male bonding.

Strip clubs. Participants related how their experiences of visiting strip clubs related to peer groups and belonging. One participant shared: “Yeah so, I remember one of my friends went to a strip club on his 18th birthday. He was like ‘You guys it was like crazy’ and stuff... They just told me it was fun, so I kinda was curious at that point.” His description of becoming curious after engaging in a conversation with other men was mirrored by another participant who described that process:

So they would go to these strip clubs to get, kind of like group lap dances. You know, all these kids would go and pay for group lap dances and they would come back to school bragging about what happened last night. At first, I was really kind of shocked about this. Like, “How can they do this? How can they go to these place?” But it was also like—there was also a feeling of admiration. Like, “Wow, they dared to go to these places! They actually did it!” In my innocent mind that was definitely something you did not do. But they were doing it. And that was like, “Wow that’s strange.” And they

would tell stories about what happened there and what was the woman like, and what happened—or what kind of thing this stupid teenager did there. But it was always this mix of being funny and daring, and awesome, at the same time. Kind of like a scary story.

The manner in which strip clubs became part of participants' sexual development was strongly connected to the male peer groups that they were embedded in.

Buying sex. Purchasing sex was also discussed by men as a process that was shared and promoted as necessary in belonging to male peer groups, and as part of learning about masculinity. Notably, sex buying was celebrated only within certain contexts, as participants expressed ambivalence regarding the act of purchasing women in a generalized way. One man captured this ambivalence when discussing trips to brothels in his adolescence:

There were a few stories of guys that were so horny after that session that they would stay in and actually pay for sex afterwards. Not many of them did that, but when it happened it was like, that was like “He did it! He took that extra step.”

When asked if this was seen as brave, he replied:

I think so—maybe brave for some people—but in the group of friends I had there was also a sense of, “That guy he couldn’t control himself, or he was an asshole, or that was wrong to do,” or something like that. I think there was this double feeling.

Thus, participants expressed both admiration and dislike for sex buying, with perceptions shifting depending on the context in which it was shared and experienced.

The armed forces provided one context in which sex buying seemed clearly connected to a sense of belonging to the male peer group. In one man’s example taken from his experience in the armed forces, male peer groups would promote the use of sex buying to address the issue of a man’s virginity:

Now don’t get me wrong there were a couple guys that were [virgins] and they got a little razzing. Not that much. But at the same point that’s also where the whole prostitution came into mind too because we were getting ready to deploy and go to Iraq and they said, “Hey we’re not going to let this guy go and die for his country a virgin. We’re going to go find him a fucking hooker and shit.”

Within military contexts, sex buying was conceptualized as a necessary point of access into belonging and masculinity, particularly when sex had not been accessed, otherwise. Sex buying was also celebrated in the military outside of concerns regarding virginity. As one man stated about his experience on a base in the United States: “The people who [bought sex], or made jokes about that were always like, ‘Oh hey, fuck yeah! I found this girl on Backpage last night. Fuckin’ A!’” For participants who talked about the armed forces, sex buying was a shared male experience that was discussed openly when bonding with other men.

Sex buying in all male groups was also described within contexts of celebration and events, such as birthdays and bachelor parties. One participant gave the following narrative:

One of my boys—it was his birthday and one of them brought up—“let’s get a girl for him!” And I didn’t know what was going on. And so I was like, “Let’s go! Let’s do it!” And then all of a sudden it was a no-no. So I mean, there at that time, it felt like a sense of belonging, because I was with the group. I was with my friends stuff like that.

This participant stated that the process of being amongst friends was the catalyst for his first sex buying experience. Another participant referenced a bachelorette party and how sex buying was perceived:

I sort of feel like [buying sex] is something where if you do it and you are talking to the right crowd, it’s kind of like, “Hey high five!” Like, I heard a story about my brother in law—my sister was getting married... my brother in law’s brother ended up with a prostitute, and no one wanted people to know but he was the “man of the party.”

For this participant, the practice of sex buying was an open secret in which the sex buyer was celebrated by his peers. Participants shared details regarding how being amongst groups of men shaped how, and whether or not, they accessed sex buying.

Relational disconnection. Participants contextualized themes of disconnection through their descriptions of how masculinity was communicated to them in their youth. They relayed memories of failing to embody ideals of masculinity and accompanying experiences of rejection by both male and female peers. One participant stated,

When I was in my high school years... a lot of what was happening among men was about sex. Like, "If you've never kissed a girl" and then, as you grow older it was, "Well, have you ever seen a woman naked?" And eventually, "Have you ever had sex with anyone?" That was kind of the things that you had to do as you grow up. And I think there was a lot of pressure on that... to be part of this friends groups, or however you want to call it, I called them gangs but they were not gangs, they were just rich kids, not really doing anything but excluding. Like, the popular kids, then the unpopular kids.

This participant connected these popular "gangs" in his school with a sense of disconnection and rejection in his youth, but also with a sense of the prescriptive course a man's sexual development should take according to social norms.

Three main threads arose from the data provided by participants on Disconnection.

Women as Gatekeepers centered on narratives regarding men's need to access women sexually in order to establish connections with their all male peer groups. Lack of Masculine Attributes included discussions of aspects of participants identities that caused them to question their ability to fit into stereotypes of masculinity. Finally, Lack of Resources highlighted experiences in which participants felt disconnected from male peers and male adults in their lives due to their socioeconomic status.

Women as gatekeepers. Participants offered narratives of women as gatekeepers to the world of men. Within the participants' narratives, obtaining a female sexual partner was conceptualized as an important aspect of fitting in with other men. One man stated,

It was just like the constant feeling of being out of the loop or feeling weird because I wasn't having sex. Yeah it was just something that I wanted to do, not only because physically I was having those desires, but because everyone else was as well. Yeah, I don't think I ever did really fit in.

This participant expressed a sense of disconnection from his peers, and a decision to prioritize sex in order to "fit in" better with his male peer group. Many men expressed that this need to prioritize sex and sexuality was made difficult due to the possibility of women's rejection.

Participants described women as having more power and control over sexuality than men due to implicit cultural understandings which stipulated a dynamic wherein men must be “more sexually driven” than their female counterparts. Women on the other hand were seen as having the ultimate power to reject male sexual overtures. One man explained,

[Men] just seek it out more. A woman in the same situation feeling the same sexual desire could walk into any bar and usually take a guy home that night, really regardless of what she looked like, and there would be someone there she could take home because of men’s sexual desires.

Women’s power within sexuality related to dynamics of fitting in, or not belonging, to the world of men. As one man described,

There was always one girl that I was madly in love with, and that was the one that scared me the most, I couldn’t even get close to her. So I think that was what was intimidating about them—was that I really liked them. I also saw them as very powerful over me. As I told you, I was always younger, and so I always saw them as women and me as this little kid.

The function of women’s sexually derived position of power was contextualized by participants as a byproduct of men’s “desire” and “need” for sexual access, as well as their desire to be seen as masculine within male peer groups.

Some participants turned to purchasing sex as a way of circumventing potential rejection by women while legitimizing their presence and participation when bonding with male peers. As one participant explained,

I just remember wanting to be rid of [my virginity] because you’d hear stories about other men—in talking with friends or coworkers you know—and they would talk about what they did over the weekend and their conquests. Not saying that this is right—but I kind of felt left out. So I was like, “Come on! Well, maybe if I have sex with this prostitute that will start the trigger or start the wheels in motion and then things will really be happening—some magic.”

A lack of sexual experiences was what contributed to the participant’s experience of being “left out” and he found that he could access belonging if he accessed women’s sexuality. Participants also described lying about sex and sexuality as a form of avoiding disconnection with men, while

circumventing women's perceived gatekeeping role as arbiters of sexual access. A participant described,

Yeah, when you make up stories you feel like, "Oh they're going to call me out." That little fucking, "I'm a liar" pit in your esophagus... There's always that feeling. But you wanted to be cool so you did things like that. You told these stories, you made shit up.

Participants stated that lying about sexuality was a method for avoiding disconnection if one was not meeting the sexual expectations of their peers.

Lack of masculine attributes. Participants offered stories from their youths wherein they experienced disconnection from peers and family members due to not fitting the ideals of manhood. One participant stated, "Oh it's very awkward because you don't get along with—you can't really relate to family—even the women. Most of the women had that kind of idea so you can't really relate to that." Participants noted that the process of being excluded due to a lack of masculine attributes was one way that they learned about masculinity.

Physical characteristics were often cited as a reason for being ostracized or feeling left out of male peer groups. One participant discussed how despite taking on masculine roles, he continued to feel physically lacking in comparison to his male peers. He stated,

Yeah, I did everything I was supposed to. Like I had a manual labor job and I was playing sports and had guy friends. But then part of me didn't because I was always a little bit smaller growing up and I felt like there were other guys my age that were more of a man than I was just because they were having sex and doing things like that.

Another participant offered his experience of being bigger as a lack of fitting in with other men, "I was wanting to fit in but I couldn't. I didn't fit the physical natures: tall, handsome, fit, I was overweight as a child." Finally, participants highlighted their sexual development as being related to their ability to fit in and feel connected,

I was the younger in my cohorts always, and besides that I got my puberty when I was like 16 or something. So I was totally less sexual developed than my peers. So that was always kind of a conflict for me, because I was always seen as like childish or feminine

sometimes. So there was a lot of bullying related to that during a certain period in school.

Participants related that their physical attributes were associated with their understandings of what was required of them to be masculine.

Participants stated that their interests contributed to their sense of being included or excluded from the world of men. As one participant remembered,

I thought maybe I could be like an actor or something... in a very homophobic area that was married to, "People don't do that you know—you go to LA to be a weirdo actor or something." Because really what you're saying is that you're gay.

The participant's family attempted to redirect his interest towards a more traditionally male profession by stating, "You can be a lawyer, you can be a doctor, you can be a policeman or something like that." Participants expressed a feeling of alienation and disapproval from peers and family members in expressing interests that lay outside of traditionally masculine roles.

Being perceived as weak was also highlighted as contributing to feelings of disconnection from peers. One participant stated, "I never felt that I fit it at all... I was not physically a big person, I wasn't athletic, I didn't like to fight, I got bullied because I didn't like to fight which caused a family raucous." Participants recounted that being perceived as weak also included sharing or having emotional experiences. Participants shared examples such as, "You can't overtly show your love," and "No crying, no none of that, be tough and stuff." Participants stated how the threat, or experience, of disconnection served to transmit the expectations of masculinity to them during their lives.

Lack of resources. Several participants relayed experiences of disconnection when it came to issues of socioeconomic class and being around other men. A participant shared,

I made one or two friends every now and then but nothing really serious because as soon as I got done with school I went home. I didn't hang out or go to the local Dairy Queen

to hang out with everybody else—mostly because I didn’t have the fucking money to do it but—I just went home.

Lack of access to financial resources served to alienate the participant from the world of his male peers in school. Another participant described his concern with having his male peers notice the class differences between them. When asked what concerned him about his father’s regular absence at boy scout meetings, he stated:

That I would be rejected. I mean I felt like I was having to fake my way into their groups. Again, that self-esteem thing, I didn’t feel I was good enough, because they had the parents that were there, they had the new equipment. Whereas I was having to provide on my own for all of that.

Socioeconomic class was discussed as a factor in feelings of disconnection within same age peers, and in the shaping of the participants’ abilities to connect to the world of masculinity.

Male Understandings of Women

Table 4

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Themes of Male Understandings of Women

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Tertiary Theme
Male Understandings of Women	Sexualized Women	Fantasy Woman
		Sexually Useful Woman
		Morally Misguided Woman
	Nurturing Women	Dehumanized Women
		Not Sexually Motivated
		Extension of the Man
	The Female Friend	Fulfilling Wifely Duties

When participants referred to women in their narratives, they generally indicated having two primary frameworks for how they viewed women. One participant elaborated on this idea by discussing his view of women that he encountered when frequenting bars. He stated,

It wasn’t so much traits that I looked for as it was actions. If I was in a bar and a girl was getting drunk and hanging on everybody, that’s just one of the ones you play with. If I saw a girl that I liked, and she wasn’t really hanging out with anybody, and I actually had to go approach her, that meant that was somebody I could converse [with], and

everything else, as opposed to one that wants to just play around with everybody. And that's how I saw the two types.

He reported that, within his male peer groups, one type of woman was discussed openly while the other type was shown “respect.” He stated,

Well they basically had two ideas. They had the one night stand, or the 2am special or whatever they liked to call it. You know? Everyone had different names for it—the drunk girl you picked up at the bar and plowed and left home. And then there were the girls you were actually trying to make a relationship with. The ones that you were actually trying to make a relationship with, they actually had a little more respect and everything else like that, “oh hey this is my girlfriend.”

This participant's conceptualization that there were two categories of women was reinforced by his peers, and the social messages he received about women. Participants' narratives about sexuality and relationships contained narratives of interpreting women's actions, or inactions, to determine the type of relationship that could be established with them.

The secondary themes that arose from the data on participant's views of women were Sexualized Women, Nurturing Women, and Female Friend. From the data emerged the tertiary theme of Sexualized Women, which was a category of women that men perceived as fitting a fantasy stereotype, while simultaneously also being viewed as damaged and dehumanized. Nurturing Women was comprised of descriptions of a domestic partner: a woman who did not prioritize sexual gratification as much as men, and who desired the position of an idealized spouse. Women that were viewed within the role of Female Friend were conceptualized as occupying a transitional space for the participants, as participants disclosed awaiting a shift from friend to either Sexualized Women or Nurturing Women; the exceptions for this phenomenon were the women that did not meet participants' expectations for the sexualized or domestic ideas they had about women.

Sexualized women. When participants discussed women they viewed as sexualized, they referred to women that they connected to the commercial sex industry, or to women whom they perceived to be transactional in their sexuality. As one man described,

I mean it's a horrible adage of "it's the oldest profession" but even back into the Stone Age you know, it was a means of getting needs met. A woman was hungry, and she needed food, and there's a man who had a fresh antelope that he had just taken down, so there has to be some sort of trade involved. The man isn't going to just give it to her for free.

The participant expressed that women's sexuality was, evolutionarily speaking, a tool for trading and bartering with men. Another man expressed a similar sentiment when discussing why he would not purchase sex. He stated,

The idea among the guys was "I'm not going to pay for sex when I can go out and get it for free from some gal." Well it wasn't really free—you invested a lot of money to get to know someone well enough to have sex with them.

Participants characterized sexually available women as being defined by a transactional approach to their sexuality.

Information about sexually available women was shared between men, facilitating bonding within male peer groups. As one participant recounted,

Hookers or prostitutes were a subject of like jokes—or taken lightly—but it was never something that people were like, "yeah let's go purchase sex." ... There was one time at a baseball game, and afterwards one of my friends pulled out this ad from a newspaper—from an article of some sort—and it had a girls' picture on it and a number and we prank called her and I guess she was a prostitute. I guess he was just messing with her I think, and just called her and did the weird accent of a prank call and stuff.

Participants did not exclusively view Sexualized Women as a part of their sexual lives, rather they also used women they viewed in this category to facilitate male bonding through humor at the expense of these women.

The emergent themes from participants' perceptions of sexualized women were Fantasy Woman, Sexually Useful Woman, Morally Damaged Woman, and Dehumanized Women.

Sexually available women were conceptualized as meeting the expectations of men's erotic fantasies, and were viewed in a utilitarian manner. Women were also conceptualized by participants as having moral ills and as being sub-human due to their association, imagined or real, with the commercial sex industry.

Fantasy woman. Participants described a class of women that was relegated to the realm of sexual fantasy, and which they distinguished from women they wished to be in a committed relationship with. One participant explained this bifurcation of women as follows,

I always thought that there was a part of me that never really truly grew in age; or that I was still wanting to go back and date people that were younger than me because sexually, that's where I was. That's what I was attracted to. But in a relationship, I wanted to be with someone that I could see in my everyday life.

This participant expressed the manner in which his fantasies about women he wished to date developed in a separate trajectory from the women that were seen as erotic and sexually desirable. Participants described the manner in which different characteristics were eroticized and seen as sexual.

The eroticization of women from foreign countries was also discussed. One participant stated, "We fly port to port and you hit all those exotic places, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia. You hit these places that are known for that." He went on to recall that purchasing sex from women in these parts of the world "becomes this glorified thing" within the branch of the armed forces in which he served. While in the armed forces there was a commonly held expectation communicated to this participant that he pursue sex buying in Southeast Asian countries in order to meet his assumed sexual needs. Pursuing and fostering erotic fantasies about specific types of women was distinguished by participants from pursuing women who were acceptable as committee partners and wives.

Sexually useful woman. Participants viewed women as useful or utilitarian due to the sex they could procure from them. One participant described his views of the woman that he lost his virginity to as follows,

Just someone I met in the gym. And we never really had much of a relationship—just a few sexual encounters in my friend’s house... She was actually married and I was like “I don’t know how I feel about this, at all.” Also, there was just nowhere to meet. And I didn’t really see a purpose after we had done it a few times.

The participant’s relationship with the woman was ended after he had sexual intercourse with her in order to lose his virginity. Other participants similarly described this utilitarian manner of viewing women,

The one who goes and hugs and flirts with this guy, and then goes and hugs and flirts with that guy, and then goes and gets a drink from this guy, and bounces around the bar—the bar butterflies you know—who flutter around to everybody you know. If I saw the ones that were doing that, if I was in the mood to just play around and have some fun I would holler at her. But if I wasn’t, I would do whatever I was doing before. If I was in the mood to swing something that was actually meaningful I would find the ones that were more stable.

Participants drew distinctions between the women that could be utilized to achieve sexual goals, and the women that were deserving of “respect” who could be pursued for committed relationships.

Other participants described the commercial sex industry as a useful tool that could be accessed to meet men’s needs. These men described respecting the women within these frameworks. As one man stated about women in brothels,

They were there to teach you these things—they were the experts. Yeah, I didn’t have any feeling that they were downgraded in many ways. I think that that feeling gets more common as you get older. But when you were these young kids, women in these strip clubs were just awesome.

He further described the sentiments that his peers shared,

I remember this one conversation with a guy that I hated. There was a few other people that said, “well no—I’m never going to go to [brothels], you should wait until you get married to have sex.” And this guy was saying “you have to learn how to have sex

before you get married otherwise how do you expect to have sex with your girlfriend or your wife? Learn it there. That's stupid. You have to learn it beforehand—and this is where you go to learn about these things.” And I was like, it was stupid, but at the same time it was common sense.

Women in prostitution were described as being valued for ability to impart sexual knowledge and skills to buyers. Participants' stories about women included the notion that sexually available women, through prostitution or otherwise, had a useful and important utility in male sexual development.

Morally misguided woman. Sexually available women, particularly those in the commercial sex industry, were conceptualized by participants as having poor moral character and were seen as making poor life decisions. One participant described his understanding of these women as needing to make better employment decisions. He stated,

I can't tell you how many times I met with women who had a bible on their windowsill or something... I realized that they were trapped in something that I didn't really understand. It wasn't easy for them to get out of it. I knew from my experience in business that even if they put that behind them and went and got a job, even if it was at McDonald's or Wendy's, that they could work themselves up even into a managerial position which would make them plenty good enough money to take care of them.

Women in prostitution were simultaneously depicted as trapped in a difficult circumstance, and also as women who had the means by which to escape prostitution through entry-level fast food employment.

Drug use by women in prostitution was labeled by participants as another indicator of their absent or misguided morals. One participant discussed his father's views as a police officer,

He would pick up prostitutes that were out working on the streets during his job, and when he would talk about it he would say that the johns got off pretty basic. They didn't want them, they were interested in the prostitutes. That's “the source of the crime” was how he put it... He had opinions of them, he thought they were mostly druggies and junkies just doing it to get their next fix.

Participants reported receiving messages from friends and relatives regarding the idea that prostituted women's need for drugs was a driving factor in maintaining prostitution, or they claimed to witness it themselves. As another participant stated, "Like I've seen these types of women when I came back from overseas and most of those women were strung out or on drugs. But over[seas] where I was, those women weren't drugged out or anything—more just about the money." This participant concluded that in the United States prostitution was connected to women needing drugs, which was not the case in the foreign country where he lived for a time.

Participants also relayed that they viewed women within the commercial sex industry as having a predatory nature. As one participant stated, "They won't leave you alone, cuz they want money. Whatever means. They need it—they want money. And I don't blame them. They're basically used-car salesmen in a different manner—they don't leave you alone."

Another participant described women in a strip club,

I remember in my mid 20s going to a bachelor party and they wanted to go to a strip club and I was like "really?" And I remember being like, "this is horrible—all they want is your money. We could go do something else." By something else I didn't mean to go pick up prostitutes. That's not what a group of guys does.

Women in the commercial sex industry were conceptualized as predators who victimized or financially exploited men. Narratives of prostituted women's need to procure drugs, as well as their tendency to prey upon men for financial wealth, and their lack of desire or capacity to obtain alternative employment legitimized characterizations of the women as morally misguided.

Dehumanized women. Participants viewed women as a sub-ordinate class when they were viewed as overtly sexual or associated with the commercial sex industry. One participant, in describing a conversation with his employer, stated,

He used to chase the prostitutes out of his store that would come in off the street in the north part of the city. I didn't even know what a prostitute looked like. He says "well that gal was a prostitute that had been here." And I says "well how do you know" "Well

look at the way she is dressed, look at what she's wearing and stuff." ... He used to laugh about them, you know.

This participant's employer's behavior in response to, what he perceived to be, the presence of prostituted women in his business communicated to the participant that the women were both undesirable and unacceptable. Another participant expressed the sentiment as follows, "There wasn't a message there that they didn't deserve as much respect, but that they were a lower class—different." Participants emphasized that viewing sexualized women, or prostituted women, as a subordinate class of people was a reflection of the social order, and that it was not inherently disrespectful.

Participants recounted the manner in which selecting women to purchase sex from was disconnected from who they were as people. As one man described,

I went to a website that was kind of like, a call website and I just went to the last one—the cheapest one—there was a scale of prices of course. And that's something that happened always—like I never chose anyone. I never really cared how the person looked, or who they were, or how old they were, or if they were this type or this other type, or anything like that. It was always about just doing it and not really thinking about choosing what or who.

This participant described how the details of the women were unimportant in his seeking of sexual gratification, as those details were secondary to the price she was charging. For men in the study, the humanity of the sexualized females was not as salient a feature as the sexual experience they were seeking.

One participant, who had completed mandatory classes on the commercial sex industry as a requirement of his military service, described the effects he saw of dehumanizing women. He recalled a particular class stating, "It was about you know, Filipinos that were coming into Korea as opposed to Joe's daughter from next door, so no one gave a shit. It wasn't personalized—it didn't strike home." This participant summarized that the class was ineffective as the military men continued to purchase sex so called "Juicy Girls" in the area. The class did

not serve to mitigate the dehumanization that was already in place when men thought about women who were in prostitution, or were otherwise sexualized.

The nurturing women. Participants also relayed stories regarding women that they viewed as nurturing, which was distinguished from the sexualized framework described above. As stated previously, men discussed the distinctions between sexual and nurturing women during their narratives. One stated, “I started leaning more towards, there are two types of women, the kinds you play around with and the kinds you get serious about.” For participants, finding women within the category of nurturer was an important life step for their personal transition toward the path of being a “good provider.”

Notably, these women were not always in the position of mother or of wife. One man described his father’s views of women’s responsibility to nurture. He stated,

Well my dad’s dream was that when he got old—there was three younger sisters and a younger brother—and one of the things he used to say was “well your sister,” the older of the three, “can drive me around when I get to be an old man.”

This participant was made to understand that his father intended to shape his relationship with his daughter so that she would take on the role of caregiver for him. Participants viewed certain women in their lives as necessarily fulfilling the role of nurturer in order to meet men’s emotional and physical needs.

Tertiary themes of Not Sexually Motivated, Extension of the Man, and Fulfilling Wifely Duties were derived from participants’ narratives regarding women who nurtured and married men. Within men’s narratives, women that were considered to be nurturing were generally seen as not being sexually motivated in the same manner as their male, or more sexual female, counterparts. Women that were considered wives or nurturers were also seen as an extension of participant’s identities as men. Within this relational positioning, participants narratives of

women also relayed the expectation that women meet their male partners' sexual and emotional needs.

Not sexually motivated. Participants emphasized the manner in which nurturing women were not driven by sexuality in the same manner as men, or their more sexualized counterparts. As one man stated, "I think there is the primordial need that men have. The need to procreate—there's that instinct of laying our seed everywhere. Whereas women, they are more of the 'let's nurture and take care of everything else in life.'" Men portrayed this difference as either a biological or as a social difference in women's priorities. As one man explained, "If they wanted a man to sleep with, it would be easy to set up. It doesn't seem to be that hard to do. There always seems to be somebody who will take you up on the offer." A characteristic of nurturing women was that they deprioritized sexual experiences which was important in distinguishing them from their overtly sexual counterparts.

Participants also recounted ways in which women classified themselves along these lines. As one participant stated,

One of the gals in the group was having regular sex with a guy, and they just about had her labeled as a whore—that was the girls talking. But they just waited till they were out of high school to get to the same place.

This participant discussed witnessing women creating the same distinctions as his male peers when they labeled sexually active women as "whores" and sexually conservative women as respectable, despite having similar sexual drives. Participants recounted the manner in which women either deprioritized sex, pretended to deprioritize sex, or had presumably lower sex drives as a part of their roles as nurturers and caregivers.

Extension of the man. Participants reported viewing women that were to be wives or nurturers as extensions of themselves as men. One man described his understanding of collectively held qualifications for women considered to be marriageable. He stated,

The best you can get, which is relative of course but you know, in those days was sort of an unspoken thing. You know you didn't want an ugly girl, or a heavy girl, or a weirdo, or go down the line—black girl or something. Like basically, that meant a fairly white and pretty [girl].

Participants believed they needed to date a specific type of woman to project a desired level of masculinity. Another participant described, “now to be a grownup or a man, you go get the one you want. Don't settle.” Participants characterized men who “settle” for a woman below their status as lacking in maturity and masculinity. For participants, the qualities of their prospective wives were thus seen as a reflection of who they were as men.

Participants reported learning that their role as men required them to prioritize and “worship” women who were in the position of wife or nurturer. One participant discussed his mom's lessons about how to treat women as a man. He stated, “kind of like putting them in a kind of special category of beings—that you have to really worship them in many ways.” This participant's identity as a man required placing women on a pedestal. Another participant described this manner of relating to women in further detail. He stated,

I ran into it to with an ex, where they said, “it's too much pressure to be that for somebody.” Your intentions are noble and there are—I'm sure a lot of women that would be like, “I would love that! What are you kidding? To have some guy fall all over me, and treat me like a princess, and spoil me, and constantly be saying nice things and tell me they love me.” ... But people aren't really comfortable being your number one—your only thing.

This participant came to conclude that identifying himself exclusively as a provider was a reflection of his personal identity and values, but not necessarily a reflection of the woman's real or stated needs. Participants identified their understanding of partners and wives as being extensions of their masculine identities and the types of masculinities that they could project onto the world.

Fulfilling wifely duties. Men described the responsibilities that they felt wives and partners had in relation to themselves and other men. Meeting the man's sexual needs was a primary responsibility ascribed to women. As one man stated,

When I had a partner, I never really felt the need for watching pornography. It's one of those things where, you have a partner there's no real reason to beat off unless said partner and you don't meet up for a while.

This participant's use of pornography was presumed necessary when he could not access his wife sexually due to her absence. Another participant stated, "I don't watch porn, I don't need porn—that's why I'm married. That's what I have you for." Participants thus connected a sense of not needing sexual or erotic outlets due to the physical presence of their wives.

In addition to sexual responsibilities towards the husband, participants also described women's emotional responsibility towards the men in their lives. One participant recounted a story in which his mother served as an emotional intermediary between himself and his father. He stated,

You know he would get mad about something—working on your soap-box derby car to the point where you finished it at your neighbors or something. Then he was broken hearted because he didn't get to do anything more with his son on that project. And I remember my mom talking to me about how much it hurt my dad that that was over there—that I just kind of turned my back on him.

The participant reported not speaking directly to his father regarding these emotional issues, but rather that his mother served as the intermediary for these discussions. Participants discussed women in their lives as being in positions of emotional responsibility, caretaking for the emotional lives of the men around them as part of their role as wives, and as nurturers.

The female friend. Participants recounted the manner in which they established relationships with women that did not fall into the other two categories. One participant described these types of relationships,

Yeah, I guess the girls that I have as friends are a lot like me. Just chill and go with the flow—not too concerned with sex or appearances. But the other girls that I’m actually attracted to and want to date, and have sex with, are your stereotypical girl that are really hot and fit—portray female sexiness.

Women that did not meet this participant’s expectations for someone he could have sex with, or date, were the women he could develop friendships with. He went on to explain, “if someone is really, really, attractive and sexy, it’s a little more intimidating to get to know them on a personal level, or on a friendship basis.” There was a higher level of pressure for this participant in attempting to connect with women that he felt could potentially become sexual or romantic partners than women he relegated to the position of friend. Participants expressed the ability to establish friendships with women, particularly if they did not fit men’s qualifications for the other two categories.

Some participants reported that female friendships took on a different quality than their friendships with other males. As one man stated,

The relationships—friendships—with women tend to be all over the board. They can be a Christian person or a non-Christian person, or a lesbian, or black, or whatever—it doesn’t matter, and we can talk about any number of things. They tend to be much more varied.... Sisterly more, sometimes. It’s a bit deeper and you know even though you don’t see each other there’s a deeper connection than the people you see once in a great while.

The participant offered the contrast of how he related to his male acquaintances, “If I am friends with a man it’s usually because we have some very specific thing in common that we are going to stick to and talk about; this band, this movie and whatever.” For some participants, they stated that having female friends allowed them to have diverse conversations and deeper friendships than with male peers.

Within the theme of female friendships, narratives of awaiting the relationship to change to the status of romantic or sexual partner were sometimes included. As one man stated,

A woman that I would be interested in, and I would try and get to know them, and they would do the whole “I want to keep it at we’re just friends.” And it’s like “ok.” That kind of turned into “well if we’re just friends, or maybe if I continue being friends she’ll change, she’ll see how great of a man I am, and those thoughts will change down the road.”

Female friends were viewed by this participant as potential partners leading him to sometimes redouble his efforts in proving his worthiness as a partner. Another participant described the utility of being friends with a woman in order to facilitate access to a strip club,

At 15 I was actually going to school with a girl who was stripping as well—don’t know how exactly—she had a fake ID or something. And I was the only one in our group who had a conversation with [her]—or one of two people—so, I took her to work a couple of times and she got us all in there one particular time... I think, saw her as at least somewhat attractive, and [we] were hoping that she was going to come out.

The participant’s friendship with this female peer provided an access point for entering a strip club at a young age, as well as the possibility of seeing her “come out” and strip for himself and his friends. Participants recounted the manner in which the category of Female Friend could be a transitory identity, which ultimately might facilitate access to more desirable or prioritized experiences.

Emotional Lives of Men

Table 5

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Themes of Emotional Lives of Men

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Tertiary Theme
Emotional Lives of Men	Mental Health Issues	Isolation Depression Lack of Support
	Negative Coping Strategies	Drugs and Alcohol Pornography Sex as Panacea Purchasing Sex
	Love	Absent Love Intimacy Family of Origin Friendship

Participants discussed their personal inner lives, and their emotionally salient interpersonal experiences. They offered a variety of stories and personal understandings, with the bulk of the data being comprised of narratives regarding isolation, mental health issues, and a lack of positive coping strategies. One participant shared his story,

I had been home for two months from the mission trip, and I was having a hard time reconnecting with old friends and finding a purpose. Because when you are there, everything else is on hold until you come back. It's kind of like coming out of being in jail for two years—it's like a sensory overload. And I was having a hard time reconnecting with my family and my friends and I thought that if I were to [buy sex], it would maybe somehow jump start me on a better path, or on a happier path.

Isolation and a loss of community were highlighted by this participant, who explained that he turned to purchasing sex as a possible solution for his emotional problems. The emergent theme of Mental Health Issues captured the emotional turmoil the participants experienced and the coping strategies they utilized to face their difficulties.

The theme of Love emerged from participants' stories about their emotional experiences, with descriptions of both positive experiences and also painful experiences. One participant defined love as follows,

That's how my parents have always showed my sister and I, and that's how I show my family and my friends that I love them and care for them and stuff. That's what I think love is. Respect, caring, you know—almost everything that's got to be positive.

While a different participant within the focus group shared, “We are all individuals, so we can consider love something different you know. We can consider love like talking to someone, or cuddling with someone or something like that.” Thus, the discussions of love emerged in a variety of ways with participants having varied definitions and understandings about love and how it shaped their emotional experiences.

Mental health issues. Participants shared their experiences having to do with Isolation and Depression in their daily lives, which formed the first two tertiary themes. One participant

expressed, “I would like to think that was in my mind. Like a depression or something—I don’t know. Because in my right mind I don’t think I would have done that. I don’t know.” For this participant, he connected purchasing sex with depression and a lack of understanding about his mental health state. Participants also discussed a Lack of Support in navigating their emotional concerns, with difficulty in finding peer or professional support.

Isolation. Participants offered many stories about isolation when discussing their emotional and relational experiences. One participant stated, “I didn’t have hardly any close male friends because I always viewed them as a threat. And I mean my self-esteem was already low enough I didn’t need to want to add to that.” Other participants reported having male companions, but stated that they had difficulties in discussing their personal lives with others. One stated,

I guess the best thing to say is that I don’t really have anyone to talk to about it. I mean I have couple of old army buddies but I haven’t seen them in while... I haven’t really talked with anyone about sex or relationships or porn or anything like that in years.

This participant recounted not having shared his personal and emotional life with others for a prolonged period. Other participants stated that their emotional isolation also occurred with intimate partners. One participant stated,

I wasn’t able to physically do anything with my wife, which was aggravating her as well. So between her getting aggravated and me getting aggravated I wasn’t telling her that I was having problems, I was just like “No, I don’t want to do anything—leave me alone,” and then roll over and go to sleep.

This participant’s physical issues related to sexual intercourse became emotionally difficult and created silence in his relationship that he found difficult to address. Emotional distance played a role in stories that participants shared regarding their mental and relational well-being.

Participants recounted stories in which emotional distance was modeled for them by the adults in their lives. One participant gave a particular example of his father responded by

creating physical and emotional distance from the entire family in response to mental issues with the participants' mother. He recalled,

He never did leave that night, but he built a building in the back of the garage that he called his shack... I can't remember when he moved out there, but he moved out and had a bar on the door. He just lived out there and mom lived in the house. He would come into the house for his Saturday night bath. And, you know, for a while the secret code was if you knocked on the door to get in, if you were one of the kids he would open the door and if it was mom he wouldn't.

The participant described watching his father emotionally and physically disconnect from the family, creating a separate physical existence for himself just outside the family home.

Participants described memories of witnessing purposive emotional isolation as a male response emotionally and relationally difficult situations.

Within the participants' narratives, shame was often associated with moments of emotional and relational isolation in men's lives. They recounted in particular the way shame shaped their growing silence and isolation regarding pornography use and sex buying. As one participant expressed, "I wasn't proud of what I was doing at the time, I was ashamed of it, I didn't tell anyone about it." The experience of shame was closely connected to the participants' narratives about their use of the commercial sex industry. Shame was even more prevalent in narratives regarding their arrests.

I felt less of man—that I have to pay for sex, that I would be looked down upon. Already there was enough in my life that I felt that I was being looked down upon—a lot of stuff made up in my head but such is life. It's just a lot of that shame. Now it doesn't help that I went to jail. That adds a whole other level of shame because I didn't have any friends that I knew of that had went to jail.

Shame was offered by participants as an emotional experience that was closely connected to their feelings of emotional and relational isolation.

Depression. Depression and suicidal ideation were a part of some of the participants' narratives when describing their experiences in purchasing sex. A participant recalled the period after his separation with his wife,

I would have surplus time, and no real other thing to do, or anything that really captured my attention. And in those instances, you kind of, you got a whole day ahead of you... Now instead of you know, "I got Saturday afternoon until the wife gets home." Now I've got forever. I've got Saturday mornings, Saturday afternoons, Sunday, Sunday morning and I have nothing. You know? I have nothing. I am looking for things so I keep existing.

Losing a relationship contributed to feelings of hopelessness and difficulty in finding activities or relationships that could sustain the participant. He went on to state,

I don't know that I actually had an active plan, but I had definitely reached a point that, in that era of, hey you know, if something happens today that puts me in harm's way, if that's what happens today, then it doesn't really matter.

This participant described feelings that his life and safety did not matter. Participants recounted varying levels of mental health issues, with depression being a common theme amongst some of the participants.

Lack of support. Participants described a lack of community and support when it came to managing their interpersonal and emotional difficulties. Participants recounted that it was difficult to find friends and peers in whom they might entrust their stories and interpersonal difficulties. As one participant stated,

Nobody I knew who was around my age—who was a man—was going through anything similar... So there was no place that I found that I could go, "How do you deal with a thing like this?" There was no frame of reference.

He continued on to say,

Guys I know who are married who are roughly my age would be like, "I wish I had your life now. You can do whatever you want. You don't have kids yelling at you all the time. You don't have a wife that you're not going to sleep with anyway. What are you complaining for?"

This participant reported a lack of support for his emotional struggles in his marriage. He also highlighted the relationship he perceived between this isolation and his experience of depression following his marital separation.

Participants discussed the manner in which financial support was emphasized over emotional support in their families of origin. As one participant explained,

There was no guidance. Twenty or 30 years ago I was in my teens—there was really nobody guiding me in [being a man]. I wasn't being reckless at that time... I wasn't a bad kid, but there wasn't really any parental figure that was guiding me in ways other than "Hey we are providing a roof over your head and there's food on the table and such."

Some participants described how support from other men was given through monetary resources rather than through mentorship or emotional support.

The lack of emotional support for men was also reported to exist within the realm of professional support systems. As one participant stated,

I tried to find different groups—I mean, I found this group not because I had to, but because I was looking for a group for men to talk about—not just [sex buying], but a lot of other things. Like a support group... I find that there isn't really good support mechanism for men of a certain age.

This participant struggled in finding groups in which men could discuss emotional challenges and found the court mandated class on sex buying as helpful due to finding other men with which to connect around mutual issues. Other participants found it difficult utilizing traditional therapy, as one participant stated, "Sometimes therapists I find—they're like, 'well what do you want to talk about?' And you're like 'Oh God! Aren't you supposed to tell me?' You need someone to kind of get stuff out of you." Lack of insight and understanding as to how to personally share emotional material made it difficult to access help even within a therapeutic relationship. Participants discussed a lack of professional and personal resources as they contended with their emotional lives.

Negative coping strategies. Methods of handling emotional struggles varied from participant to participant, though most of the men reported attempting to handle their emotional difficulties through sex, drugs, or violence. As one man expressed,

It's like booze. Alcohol is not bad in itself but if you're using it, you can go out and have a drink or something that's fine, but if you are using it as a panacea, it's the wrong application—it's not going to make you feel better. It's going to make you feel worse, eventually. You'll be an alcoholic or you'll drink too much. So it's that idea. Sex isn't a bad thing—you have sex every night with somebody for a little while and you feel great, maybe. If there is a high it ends pretty quickly and then you have the rest of the Saturday night to be by yourself and feel terrible and depressed and get into whatever else you're going to get into, drink drugs, suicidal thoughts, you name it.

This participant's view of these specific coping strategies was that they failed to address the original issue and they were treated as a “panacea,” or as an overarching solution to a problem they weren't designed to address.

Participants reported feelings of ambivalence regarding certain behaviors being viewed as coping strategies. As one participant stated when discussing pornography use as a coping strategy,

I don't like to say that I have an emotional crutch or an emotional problem... It just feels pathetic to be so tied to pornography. I would rather be addicted to cocaine. Like I have used that before and I mean I am way more comfortable and confident talking about that or like drug use than pornography. So yeah, I don't want to say it's a crutch because it makes me feel pathetic and lame... [Cocaine] makes it seem a little more normal. Because when it is an emotional thing, like I said I feel pathetic.

The labeling of pornography use as a coping strategy, for this participant, was associated with feelings of being “pathetic,” due to it being connected to emotional difficulties, whilst drug use was an acceptable strategy due to it having biological implications in terms of addiction. For participants, their identities and connections to masculinity were interwoven into the strategies that they utilized in order to cope with their emotional difficulties.

From the data on Negative Coping Strategies emerged the following tertiary themes: Drugs and Alcohol, Sex as Panacea, Pornography, Purchasing, and Violence. Drugs and Alcohol

was discussed by participants as a strategy that they and their male peers turned to for emotional coping. Sex as Panacea, Pornography, and Purchasing Sex were discussed by participants as efforts to resolve their emotional conflicts and difficulties through engaging in sexual habits that they ultimately found either unhelpful or damaging to them in the long term.

Drugs and alcohol. Participants also discussed the use of drugs and alcohol in coping with their daily stressors and emotional difficulties. One participant stated,

I use drugs every once in a while; sex, drugs, and I have a really good friend that I met not long after I got out of jail... So I guess he is an outlet. Then sports, gym, drugs, stuff like that.

Occasional drug use was described by participants as a strategy that could be utilized to cope with stressors in their daily lives. Another participant stated that he was concerned that his use of sex buying would cause him to reinitiate his drinking. He stated, “A lot of times it would be like, ‘Is it going to send me into a deeper sort of thing?’ Like ‘am I going to start drinking again because of doing this behavior?’” Alcohol and drug use were conceptualized by some participants as negative coping strategies that required monitoring, and that may increase through the use of sex buying. Participants noted a perceived interrelationship between addictive substances, sex buying, and negative coping strategies.

Pornography. Participants expressed that the use of pornographic images to masturbate was a source of emotional coping during times of stress or depression. As one participant stated about his pornography use,

I’m never having like an amazing day—like, I’m super happy and I’m going to look at pornography—it’s never like that. It’s usually, something depressing happens or I’m just overwhelmed and it’s just more of an outlet for negative feelings than positive ones.

One participant reported feeling positively after the use of pornography, which was why he turned to it during times of emotional duress. He stated, “[pornography] became something that I had that would at least bring some level of happiness, or release, or euphoria. So I guess in a

way yeah, it did feel like a void was being filled by watching pornography.” Participants discussed turning to pornography as a means of coping with negative experiences in their daily lives.

Participants described having awareness that pornography was a negative coping strategy, with some equating it to the use of drugs. A participant explained how he felt after using pornography. He shared,

Like release—and kind of good for a little bit. But then like hours later—or even minutes later—it’s like I’m in the same place that I was... Yeah, it’s kind of like a hit of a drug that doesn’t last very long.

Participants thus drew connections between pornography use and negative coping strategies.

Sex as panacea. Participants reported finding sexual intercourse and the pursuit of sex with women as being a coping strategy that they would engage in. As one participant recalled,

The day she broke up with me, I went out with friends and took home this smoking hot 22-year-old. I think I wanted to kind of continue that streak and so I—I didn’t turn to prostitution, I had no desire to do that, it didn’t even cross my mind even though I had just broke up and everything—But I started looking on Tindr, and other online sites and whatnot and kind of let that consume me somewhat.

Purchasing sex was no longer an impulse for this participant after his arrest, yet sex was still an answer to his emotional discomfort related to having his relationship end. The participant further reflected on his experience, “I think loneliness was mixed in there, and I turned to sex as an alternative. Ultimately it was wanting to be with somebody.” The participant expressed that his ultimate goal was to be in a relationship, but that sex was an alternative that he could access to deal with his feelings of isolation.

Another participant reflected on where he learned that his response to emotionally difficult situations should be to look for sexual outlets. He stated,

Yeah I think that’s a message that is out there, I think it’s a media message... “[Sex] is how you solve those things. You’re getting depressed because you’re trying to solve a problem you can’t solve. You’re not built for that. You’re only a man and this is what

men do, or what you should be doing anyway.” ... That’s how you self-medicate and then you will be better. I don’t know that any of that is true, but, that’s the message.

The coping strategy of turning to sex to ameliorate symptoms related to depression was reported by this participant as something that was taught socially and through media messages. Some participants reported that sex and attempting to find sexual release was a coping strategy that they would utilize in their lives.

Purchasing sex. Participants stated that they utilized sex buying as a means of navigating negative emotional experiences in their lives. As one stated,

I was in a spiral around my depression. I have struggled with that as long as I can remember. And so it was kind of, that thrill would help bring me up and help me feel better for that short amount of time. But then afterwards it dropped down really deep. So really just trying to grasp that short period of time.

Some participants highlighted particular stressors associated with their engagement with the commercial sex industry. As one participant stated,

I told her that day, “Well, if you don’t love me let’s just split the sheets.” And she didn’t want to do that. Cuz I got angry. It really set something going, mentally, in me. I don’t know why I went and saw a prostitute the first time. The excitement of it maybe—of another woman.

Participants noted that sex purchasing was related to attempts at coping with general emotional distress as well as with situational and relational stressors in their lives.

Participants differed in their responses as to whether sex buying was a coping strategy or simply an extension of their sexual needs. As one participant explained when asked why he purchased sex,

Mostly getting bored with beating off and you know, I’m sick of this and I want some actual fun—I want to actually be with a woman. I guess loneliness would be a part of it, but I mean mostly it was “Hey I’m tired of my right hand.”

While this participant noted that loneliness was related to his sex buying, he also emphasized that his sex buying was “mostly” an extension of his sexual desires. Another participant stated,

Yeah to be honest with you [buying sex] it was about 90% negative feelings and then maybe 10% ambition and, I don't know the word—optimism for the future. Cuz I really didn't know what I was going to do with life.

Some participants emphasized that their use of sex buying was not solely a coping strategy, but rather a mixture of wishing to cope with negative emotional experiences of their perceived sexual desire.

Love. Participants reported that a part of their emotional lives was the experience and the lessons imparted upon them regarding love. Within the larger theme of love emerged the tertiary themes of Family of Origin, Friendships, Intimacy, and Absent Love. Participants shared the manner in which their Family of Origin was instrumental in teaching them about love, and also that it was a space in which love could sometimes be expressed openly. Friendship as a tertiary theme emerged from narratives of participants sharing close relationships with others, though love was not openly expressed. Participants emphasized the manner in which Intimacy was a combination of love and physical or sexual acts; this was differentiated by some participants from non-intimate forms of sex such as sex buying and one-night stands. The final tertiary theme, Absent Love, emerged from the data on love being absent from participants home lives and how it affected their emotional development.

Absent love. Participants discussed how the absence of love was significant to them and their emotional lives. One participant discussed feeling that love was like “being hugged by a porcupine” due to his upbringing. He went on to state, “I was always told about love. But actions—certain things that happened growing up—I just can't imagine people who actually truly feel love for people would actually think or do [those things].” The participant experienced the actions of his family as contradictory to the love that was expressed verbally. The absence of intimacy and love during developmental years was associated by participants with future negative coping strategies. As one participant stated,

I definitely feel that there's an association between—in my desire to want to artificially fill intimacy around me. Because I was not getting any of that—even intimacy as a child between parents doing just common things, you know? There was none of that. As you age we still need intimacy in one form or another, and here was an artificial means of gaining intimacy that was not difficult for me to achieve.

Participants shared narratives of how they were affected by the absence of loving relationships during their developmental years.

Participants in the focus group elaborated on the manner in which the commercial sex industry intersected with an absence of love in a man's life. As one stated,

If you were someone who grew up not knowing love or not being loved, or not understanding love, or not being taught it like we were all taught by our parents, you might think of love as that cuddling, hugging, talking to somebody. So you may be led down that road. It could be construed as, paying for sex being something like love. Or just paying to be with somebody for their time—that could be construed, in a way I guess, as a loving gesture—if you will.

Purchasing sex was seen by focus group participants as a way of imitating intimacy and love if one was inexperienced or had been denied love in their life. The absence of love was thus seen as a possible step in interpreting transactional sex as an intimate interaction.

Intimacy. Intimacy was described by participants as sex that was experienced within a loving relationship. Participants in the focus group discussed the topic of sex and love. One stated, “It’s about being together, passionately, in it for the both of you. Not just being selfish.” Another participant responded by stating, “The word I would add to the conversation is intimate... I think you could also add time to that because a relationship with time develops love which develops that sexual chemistry which develops that intimacy.” Participants defined intimacy occurring within the context of a committed relationship, distinguishing this from other sexual contexts and arrangements such as one night stands.

Participants shared stories of developing intimate relationships with their same age peers in their youth, and the early explorations of their sexuality within these relationships. One participant recalled,

We were pretty much like schoolyard kids like. We bullied each other and that was the way that we showed that we liked each other... We took turns just bullying each other around like wrestling around on the ground... I remember wrestling on the ground at her house cuz she was watching her little brother—parents were out. It just happened that at one point we're kind of just face to face and I leaned in and kissed her and that was awkward, if I remember.

The exploration of intimacy through “awkward” moments that were not directly or explicitly sexual was experienced by participants as important in their emotional and sexual development. As one participant stated, “If you went to a movie show, and held a girl’s hand, you felt like it was a big accomplishment... if they held your hand during a movie it was like, ‘Wow!’”

Participants shared that these moments of intimacy did not need to be overtly sexual in order to be experienced as intimate or significant.

Other participants described how intimacy could be derived from love and sex. For instance, one participant offered his personal experience of learning to access intimacy by engaging in sexual activity. He stated, “I think it was originally the instinct to have sex and then we started pulling in like, “oh we can use that to get intimacy here not just sex.” Anyone can have just sex, but not everyone can have that intimacy between two people.” Sexual activity facilitated this participant’s ability to experience a level of intimacy which he found preferable to more anonymous sexual encounters. Still other participants viewed sex buying as a viable context in which to experience intimacy. As one participant stated,

When I was in a relationship there was somebody there to fill that role of somebody—not necessarily a sexual role—but that role of being there with me. That was what I was trying to get fulfilled by a prostitute, not necessarily the sex part.

This participant went on to emphasize that he did not always “actually have sex” with the women in prostitution, but that instead, he was satisfied to cuddle and pay for non-sexual forms of intimacy. However, most participants agreed that there were components that went beyond the sexual and included factors such as love, physical closeness, and affection.

Family of origin. Participants described the lessons that were taught to them by family members regarding love. As one participant from the focus group stated, “Love is caring, showing compassion, showing sympathy, showing that you are there for that person no matter what, through and through. That’s how my parents have always showed my sister and I love.” Another participant added, “Unconditional respect and caring... you know my parents both stood by me as I went through this whole thing—they never wavered whatsoever—it’s just the unconditional part that’s the bedrock of it for me, I guess.” Participants shared the manner in which their families were a source of love and support, and how that carried over into their adult lives.

Some participants shared stories about loving relationships in their families of origin, rather than specific lessons that they learned. As one participant stated,

Elena—she’s only a year and a half younger than me... she was the one that I hung out with and did things with the most... we talked about a lot—I mean everything. From what kind of boots I should wear/ she should wear, to who is a girlfriend/boyfriend that we were looking at.

Participants shared meaningful experiences of loving relationships within their families of origins when they discussed their emotional lives and their experiences.

Friendships. Participants shared stories of supportive and caring relationships that they had with other men and women. As one participant stated, “I have a very good relationship with my ex now. We never really stopped having a certain kind of closeness and we talk about some

things here and there.” Another participant described a close relationship with a friend as follows,

Yeah, I have a friend. I talk to him about [my breakup]. We are very close friends. He used to be my roommate before. I talked to him about that, and when I got arrested he is the one that came out and gave me a ride home, those kinds of stuff.

Participants shared their experiences of close supportive friends when asked about their emotional experiences and their daily difficulties.

Notably, some participants also reported that love wasn’t expressed openly within these types of friendships. As one participant stated,

I guess growing up it was like the family—that’s where love comes from. But once you become an adult it seems to be more of a connection between you and friends—or whoever you’re in a relationship with. I mean I think of love more as on a family level, because as a kid I don’t remember telling a friend that I loved them, but I mean maybe it was there.

Love between friends was a shared experience for most participants, though many did not share the extent of their emotional connections with these friends directly.

Transitional Moments

Table 6

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Themes of Transitional Moments

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Tertiary Theme
Transitional Moments	Disclosure Post-Arrest	Accountability with Partner Accountability with Self Accountability with Faith Ambivalence Stigma
	Cultivating Change	Motivators for Change Supportive Relationships Space for Insight Abstinence
	Expanding Masculinity	Sublimation Relational Exploration Personal Understandings

Participants described experiences of change embedded within involvement with the commercial sex industry. As each of the participants had been arrested for purchasing sex, their stories of change were often linked to their experiences of being compelled to disclose to friends and family the reason for their arrests. Within this study, these experiences were referred to as Disclosure Post-Arrest.

Other narratives of change emerged from the data, including stories in which the men pursued new relationships with themselves and others. As one participant stated,

Part of me just wanted to lead a different kind of life. And I don't know that I could, and I don't know that I can now depending on circumstances. But that was interesting to me—to see if that was possible.

These change narratives included participants' accounts of how they actively managed to create change in their lives after the arrest, such as actively seeking new relationships and environments, as well as gaining new habits to facilitate abstinence from the commercial sex industry. Participants also described how change occurred as a process of relating to their personal masculinity differently, as well as relating to friends and family in less stereotypically masculine ways.

Disclosure post-arrest. Participants described their arrests when discussing the changes that occurred in their use of the commercial sex industry. Though some participants expressed ambivalence in regard to how the arrest took place, many shared how it contributed positively to ending their sex buying. As one participant stated,

If I hadn't of shown up things would be a lot different. Now, would I have gotten busted another time? Possibly. I mean I went almost 20 years purchasing and never had any sort of legal problems with that. Maybe I would have gone another 20 years. Maybe I would have gone forever. So one of the better parts of the whole situation is more of the self-awareness that I've gotten, the insight that I've gained. I mean I've lost quite a bit inside, but I've also gained some in myself.

This participant's experience of the arrest came with negative consequences, which made him lose "quite a bit"; however, he considered the overall experience to be positive due to gaining insight through the arrest. Other participants shared related stories of having ended their sex buying and also having experienced other positive changes stemming from the arrest, though described feelings of ambivalence in regard to the arrest itself.

One participant who was arrested multiple times for purchasing sex expressed his sentiments about classes on prostitution and sexual harassment as follows:

It was just a requirement. There was a lot of those stupid little classes that we had to go through. I don't mean to say that sexual harassment or prostitution classes are stupid. I'm just saying the way that they were portrayed were never actually educational. They were mostly, "Don't do it—you're going to get in trouble." That was it.

This participant differentiated between the different types of programs that were offered to him after the arrests. He stated, "Don't get me wrong, a lot of things have changed since this class—which was a hell of a lot better than the online crap that I took." This participant's experience of being arrested did not serve as a deterrent outside of the context of a "better" class.

Participants discussed their negative experiences due to the arrest, as well as the positive consequences it had in ending a behavior that they felt was harming their personal relationships. Participants also discussed how they were personally affected in various aspects of their lives by having to disclose their prior sex buying behavior family, friends, and intimate partners.

Accountability with partner. Participants discussed how the process of being compelled to be transparent about their sex buying, due to the arrest, affected their relationships with romantic partners. The responses that participants recounted were diverse, as some participants felt it improved their relationships, while others felt it caused tensions between themselves and their spouses. One participant shared the following,

Originally I told her a lie... but it quickly snowballed and I didn't want to lie anymore. At first I was worried about losing her again, but then I just kind of reached a point and I

figured I have to deal with the consequences of my actions and I came clean to her. Surprisingly it actually strengthened our relationship.

Another participant offered a different experience between himself and his partner,

So I [told] her, and it was terrible. We've talked a lot about this later on—she knew something was going, on but she never thought it was anything like that... she never really saw this coming. So I think it was—honestly, I think in many ways it was harder on her than for me... I think she had it really, really, tough. Because she felt totally betrayed.

The experiences that participants shared regarding accountability due to the public nature of their involvement with law enforcement differed between participants, though they all reported a significant impact on their romantic relationships.

Accountability with self. Participants offered narratives of being pressed into personal accountability following the experience of the arrest. As one participant described,

I didn't want to pay for sex anymore. And it took away my relationship with my girlfriend at the time and it took away the job that was my other attention. It kind of pushed me to reach a very low point. I kind of started doing some soul searching and figuring out what I really wanted to do.

Having opportunities and relationships removed due to the arrest caused some participants to initiate personal reflection and exploration. For other participants, the arrest and concurrent accountability for their actions was an encounter with clarity that they wished to hold onto. As one participant stated,

You know I don't want to live a lie. The problem was being in a confessional church—where you get on your knees and confess your sins, and then you go home, and you struggle, and you do it again—is that you can't find an end to it. I found an end to it, it started that day in the jail cell. I don't ever want to go back there again.

Personal motivations to make changes and maintain them were precipitated for participants by their arrest and the forced disclosure to others of their previous actions.

Accountability with faith. Some participants discussed the significance of their arrest within the context of their relationships with their faith and their communities of faith. One participant shared,

I have almost felt like I have had more forgiveness from the legal system and the Group than I have within the church... After my arrest, one of the things that they required I do was covenant eyes, or some kind of a program that would monitor what you did... and my pastor gets reports if I look at anything. But it has got to the point where I don't have the desire to look at anything.

For this participant, the response from the church felt more punitive and less forgiving than the response from the legal system. However, he reported that the church's interventions succeeded in decreasing his pornography consumption, a development that he characterized as positive.

The same participant offered a different account of how his faith was affected by the forced accountability brought on by the arrest. He stated,

When you're in a jail cell with all these other guys... I was there with my head on the bench trying to get some sleep and praying and I knew that God was saying to me, "This far and no farther." You know? "You have gone this far and no farther." And I felt like I was given a chance to straighten my life out, and if I go back to that, it's all over—spiritually for me... it means enough to me that in my mind God called me out of darkness into his marvelous light. And did it one more time, and said, "This is the end, this is your last test." And I'm not going to blow that.

This participant elaborated upon how his faith, and his community of faith, was an integral part of his story in creating change in his life and altering his behaviors.

Ambivalence. Some participants expressed ambivalence regarding their experience of the arrest. Many described feeling that their arrest allowed them an opportunity for disclosure and making amends, while acknowledging the arrest as an emotionally difficult experience. As one participant stated,

Being caught by the police was just trouble. It was just problems. But it cascaded this—because of the legal things that happened—afterwards I was forced to deal with it in many ways. That being said, being caught by the police was the worst thing that could have happened to me. I guess I will never know if I would have stopped doing it without being arrested, I don't know. Probably yes, but probably not. I guess I will never know.

Participants acknowledged negative impacts stemming from their sex buying practices being illuminated within their private and public lives. However, most participants still characterized the outcomes of the arrest as helpful overall.

Stigma. Participants shared the importance of how stigma, specifically from the experience of having their sex buying practices come to light as a result of their arrest, shaped how they felt about themselves, their arrest, and their future prospects. As one participant stated,

I haven't been in a relationship since this happened. I don't know when I will be in a relationship next, not that I'm actively avoiding, but I'm also not actively looking because I still feel a stigma towards what I've been through, what I did.

This participant shared that he was placed on a sex offender registry as part of his sentencing, which added to his feelings of stigma.

Participants that discussed stigma shared that their treatment by friends and family were varied, finding that some friends and family shunned them while others offered support. One participant drew upon recent political events to create an analogy with his own experience. He stated,

I think now more than ever we see the president [Donald Trump]—a man of a certain masculine demeanor—and half the country seems to be alright with it and half the country that would say, “Well you have done these things. You're an alright guy.” And then some other people who would say, “You have done some things and you are a terrible person and you can never be redeemed.” That's just it now. You've made your mistakes.

Another participant expressed,

The responses that I got—most were better responses than I expected to get. I thought that I was going to be just some town pariah amongst my friends that would find out. But there was really only one friend that treated me horribly about it—at least openly. There were a lot of friends and family that have gone their own direction and there's just been no discussion of it.

The process of being forced into a position of accountability due to public nature of involvement with law enforcement was experienced by participants as varied in nature. Many felt both a

sense of social stigma from particular people and groups, while also experiencing support from others.

Some participants shared that the stigma they experienced following involvement with law enforcement was mostly experienced due to the arrest rather than the sex buying. As one participant stated, “I think another part of it—of the social aspect—is that you don’t want to be the guy who gets caught, and then you’re the butt of all your friends’ jokes.” When asked what was more stigmatizing—being known for having purchased sex, or being known for having been caught purchasing sex, one participant stated,

I would lean towards the stigma of getting caught versus the stigma of paying for it cuz I think that society has normalized it so much that the paying for it part really isn’t the part that you’re going to be getting shit for, it’s going to be the fact that you got caught doing it.

These participants related the stigma that they experienced following their arrest to be directly related to the arrest itself, rather than the sex buying behavior, which was experienced as “normalized.”

Cultivating change. Participants shared different methods they had for creating new habits and bringing change into their daily lives. Most of the changes that were discussed by participants centered upon the topic of decreasing pornography use and ending their sex buying. These methods for change involved having active strategies and practices in place to facilitate change. As one participant stated, “Even towards the end of the era of stopping I would set myself up in such a way to make it difficult to [buy sex]. But really, once I had reached a certain point it wasn’t difficult.” Achieving the change this participant desired required finding ways to make sex buying difficult. Some participants described a decrease in their wish to utilize the commercial sex industry for sexual gratification after periods of abstinence. As one stated,

Part of it is time and grade, as they would say in the Navy. When you're away from it, I don't think you get the dopamine impulses from your brain. The longer you're away from it the less you need it.

These participants confirmed that while they might still be drawn to commercial sex, they did not feel compelled to consume pornography or to buy sex. As one participant stated, "I have no desire to look at porn now. I mean, I think about it on occasion, but I really wouldn't want to look at it on a computer if I had access." Participants described their process in reaching these desired changes in their personal lives.

Participants went on to identify factors that motivated them into creating change within their lives. They highlighted the central role that supportive relationships had in facilitating necessary personal insight and reflection as they moved through their process. Participants also identified states of abstinence and acts of sublimation as key components to maintaining distance from the commercial sex industry, offering descriptions of how they practiced these strategies in their daily lives.

Motivators for change. Participants shared their motivations for initiating change in their personal lives in regard to their involvement with commercial sex. Participants' primary catalyst for change was their arrest and subsequent engagement with the legal system. As one participant plainly stated, "I think one of the biggest deterrents is probably legal." Another participant shared,

I mean I guess I never thought I would get caught though. I mean I probably thought about it at times, like "Eh police probably never do stings" and it kind of did happen so... everyone around me was saying it was going to be fine—like it was just going to be a ticket, because I was standing to lose a lot.

The arrest and legal system were named by most participants as the primary reason for changing their behavior and ending their sex buying.

Some participants stated that having a class about sex buying was a significant motivator for changing their behavior. As one participant stated,

So I was arrested that night, and they gave me the class's information. That's why I contacted the program... The program had me think about prostitution, and the women. Because I didn't know—before—I thought they did it by their choice, I didn't know they forced them until [the program] went through the details, and then I thought, "I can't do this anymore." I can't do this. That is why I decided I'm not going to buy sex.

This participant shared that the class he attended was helpful in clarifying the harms that occur within prostitution, ultimately contributing to his decision to no longer purchase sex. As another participant stated, referring to his class's facilitator, "James really helped me connect the dots."

One participant explained that he became motivated to change his sex buying behavior as he increased in his awareness of his own deteriorating mental health and lack of well-being. He stated,

Everything else had gotten so bad, mental health wise, it was easy to stop because [buying sex] wasn't a focus really. Like, I have done these things for the last couple of years, none of them are working. None of them are helping. You know, there's really nowhere else to go but down, which is suicide.

The participant's experience of depression, and his sense that his sex buying was exacerbating his symptoms, facilitated his change in behavior. Participants offered a variety of reasons for how they became motivated to create change in their daily lives in regard to their engagement with commercial sex, including one participant who clearly emphasized a mental health crisis as his personal catalyst for change.

Supportive relationships. Participants highlighted ways that cultivating healthy relationships with others supported their process in ending their consumption of commercial sex. In addition to the aforementioned secular groups and classes described by participants, one interviewee described finding support in male relationships within a men's church group. He explained,

You don't even talk about who was there, so you're free to confess what's going on in your life and what your problems are. Men are encouraged to be what's called a Silas which is like Paul and Silas---Silas was Paul's great supporter. And so you have a Silas. You can talk to them about anything and they have permission to speak into your life if you want to give it to them. But no one is allowed to give you their pat answer for things unless you ask them for it.

Finding a support group in which he could openly discuss pornography and sex buying was a helpful experience in maintaining this participant's goal of not re-engaging with these behaviors.

Space for insight. Participants reported benefiting from having access to spaces, in which they could develop and process personal insights regarding themselves and their behaviors. As one participant expressed,

I certainly started thinking about this way more by going through the class. And that's why I like being in it too, is because it puts me back on that revisiting—thinking again of these things. But then it started tying up with other things. Like it started tying up with my own emotional discoveries, or journeys, with my own intellectual work, which I do, [and] with my relationships with my partner and with friends around me. Then, when it started tying up with all these other things, it started to make more sense. You know?

Attending, and re-attending, an ongoing group designed to help men end their sex buying practices facilitated the process of creating new insights for this participant. Another participant stated, “[The class] gave me the chance—I mean the idea—I got the information to reflect, to think, and to evaluate myself. That's when I started to really see, ‘Yeah, that's one of the reasons I did this.’” Participants shared the importance of finding spaces in which insight could occur, and where they could process their understandings in order to affect change in their personal lives.

Abstinence. For some participants, abstaining from the commercial sex industry was an important element in making desired changes in their unwanted behaviors. One participant compared abstaining from commercial sex to dieting,

Like, if there's no option—if you don't want to eat junk food—then don't have it in your house. Then you won't have it. Right? So there's no option. Then that takes it off the table. So there was a time where I would do things like that.

In order to abstain from buying sex this participant needed to remove the behavioral triggers from his environment. Another participant reported that abstinence from pornography and sex buying became easier with time and practice. He explained,

Well for one thing, it's not looking at porn and using that as a crutch for your sexual desire. And it's hard when you've experienced that for so long—not to do it. But after nearly a year it's not so hard.

Participants shared that abstinence was a part of creating change for them when it came to pornography and sex buying.

Notably, participants did not assert that they no longer experienced desires to re-engage with the commercial sex industry. Rather, they described a process in which they abstained despite these feelings. One participant elaborated on this point in the following anecdote,

When I was in California, I was sitting out there having a cigar, and the phone text goes off. And the message is “Do you want to hook up.” And I haven't had sex in a long time, and I actually thought about it. So I said, “Who is this?” So the woman told me who it was and I said “Oh, well I'm in California now.” “Well do you want to meet me when I get home?” “Well, I don't know.” I went as far as to say, “Do you still do a sixty-dollar half?” And the next day she sends me back a text that said “Yes.” And I sent a text back that said, “Well, what I want to do I can't do, so would you please take me off your call list.” But I have to tell you, I had those old feelings deep in my balls that told me that I wanted to go do that—for that moment. I just thought about it and sent her a text back that said, “I can't do this anymore.” And she said, “Okay I'll take you off.”

Participants that described engaging in abstinence discussed the ongoing self-evaluations and level of commitment that was required in maintaining that abstinence, even as they weathered intermittent impulses and desires to do otherwise.

Sublimation. Participants described specific strategies that they utilized to distract themselves and to redirect their energy into productive activities as an alternative to turning to commercial sex when they felt tempted to return to utilizing aspects of the commercial sex industry. As one participant stated,

Yeah, I get the feeling once in a while [to buy sex], and you know, when I get the feeling I busy myself—I try and do something and think about something else... Yeah, I keep

myself busy—maybe I do some cleaning, some cooking, I volunteer at a church—those kinds of stuff.

Finding distractions and activities to engage in as alternative to buying sex again was part of some participants' process in cultivating change in their behavior.

Other participants characterized sublimating behaviors as a redirecting of their passions and energies into activities which they found more fulfilling. As one participant stated,

I think what made that shift for me was finding something that I really enjoyed and was passionate about—something that filled that void that I was trying to fill. I still want a relationship and what not, but it's not my main focus. I think [buying sex] was just something I was doing to try and fill that void, and so I found something that I was truly passionate about.

Redirecting his energy to something that was personally fulfilling helped this participant to no longer purchase sex. The sublimation of the desire to purchase sex into alternative activities that participants found useful or productive was a part of fostering change in their use of prostitution and pornography.

Expanding masculinity. Participants described the need to move beyond the limits of what was historically socially expected of them as men. Included therein was an expansion of personal views of how their masculinity was expressed in relation to others. As one participant described,

You're trying to find a ground just for people to be people—not necessarily above, certainly not beneath. There is a lot of room for debate but there is room to keep learning and to try and be better. And I try and do that all the time. I have a better feeling now—after a few years of kind of chaos—this is what I am trying to be. I don't necessarily know if I am, but I know that it's what I am trying to be.

For participants, attempting to be more egalitarian towards women meant expanding their personal views of what it meant to be a man.

Participants also described questioning and changing personal understandings and expressions of masculinity. As one participant stated,

I know that here [in the United States] we work together. The men does some of what the ladies does, the ladies does some of what the men's does. So to me, I just accept it. This is the way it is, it doesn't make any difference.

Within their narratives of change, participants described the importance of broadening their views of masculinity and increasing their flexibility towards gender norms.

Relational exploration. Men who discussed expanding their personal views of masculinity described how they shifted their relational dynamics and manner of engaging with others. One participant described changing his perspectives regarding how to embody the role of provider in his relationship with his partner. He stated,

So as the sole provider... I do feel as though you need to help with the house whether which way or not. You know, be it going out and making money and taking care of the family, or be it staying at home and taking care of the kids and cleaning the house. Either or—you should be providing in some manner, whether it be taking care of things at home or being out to take care of money issues. Whichever or possibly even both.

Another participant described exploring how he related to women as follows,

I thought I was a good husband, and I think my ex would probably say, "He was." But then there is a time when you know, if your wife wants to leave then you weren't doing something right... there is room to learn more and appreciate more and deal with people differently.

Participants described a desire to change personally held beliefs about masculinity in order to have more meaningful relationships.

Participants also shared how having conversations about sex and sexuality, and being generally more open with their partners regarding, was helpful within their relationships. As one participant stated,

Now after having been in relationships several relationships, and talking to several of the girls—a few girls that are actually open to talking about it—and point blank frankly pushing me to talk to them about it—that helped a little bit more... it wasn't until I was in my mid-twenties that I started learning to talk and communicate about wants needs, what we like, what we want to watch, what we want to play with and everything else of that nature.

The participant also highlighted how old patterns of making up stories about his sexual exploits in order to be “cool” in front of his male peers shifted along with learning to have conversations with his sexual partners about one another’s sexual needs. He stated, “After a while, when I started having girlfriends and everything else, no—I didn’t really talk about it. I didn’t really give a shit about it, because it was me, I didn’t really care anymore.” This participant ceased caring about impressing his male peers with exaggerated stories about sex, shifting his attention towards discussions with women that he was having intimate relationships with.

Participants also discussed seeking meaningful friendships with women and attempting to understand gender differences within the context of friendships. One participant gave the following example in his present life,

I talk to a lot of women friends who are upset about recent events, and one of the things they go to is, if a man says back, “Well, not all men,” It’s something they don’t want to hear. [I respond] “I’m not saying that but tell me why that is because maybe I can explain that to someone—why you don’t want to hear that, why that’s not the right reaction.” ... [They will say] “We just want acknowledgement that it happened. We don’t want to skip right to that.” ... If I can now help bridge a gap, and I can take that to somebody else because I know it. Maybe someone who might not listen to you might listen to me. Or I might have the opportunity—where I didn’t know before—I might have thought that was the right thing to say.

Engagement with women about contemporary society trends, and dialogues about women’s rights and dynamics of oppression, were highlighted by this participant as an important aspect of his own work in cultivating a more “open” attitude and his own development as an ally through the enactment of personal changes in his way of relating to others..

Personal understandings. Participants discussed ways in which their personal understandings of masculinity shifted as they made changes in their daily lives. As one participant stated, “The class helped out a lot more too—it helped enlighten me to a few more things. Like, ‘Hey you don’t always have to be the hard-stone guy that just does and does.’”

Participants shared experiences that helped them engage in personal exploration of their definitions of masculinity. Another participant stated,

I just lost my dad two and a half weeks ago. When I was down there I completely lost it. I mean, lost it, lost it—just crying my eyes out, I don't know that I would have done that at 25 either, because I would have had that stigma in my head of, "You have to be the strong man of the family." Well, guess what it turns out [is] that the man of the family is the guy who actually gives a shit about his parents and his family and holding his family together. You know?

Allowing more emotional expression during a time of emotional duress due to the loss of a family member was a point of transition for this participant, as he was able to recognize the value that his emotional presence offered to his family members. Participants offered stories of personal change, and how it specifically intersected with their identities as men and their capacity to extend themselves past their personally held prior definitions of masculinity.

Discussion

Masculinity as Pathways of Identity

Masculinity was not described as a straightforward and singular process; rather, it was depicted by participants as a set of values and mores defined across a lifespan by groups and by the individuals themselves. Within this study, participants recalled the pressures that were placed on them to enact particular types of masculine tropes during different periods in their lives, and how they responded to these ongoing pressures. They gave examples of how different systems and institutions, such as religious groups, the military, and the media provided examples that were utilized to frame their own personal masculine identities. These frameworks fell into several categories, which were In Pursuit of Being Macho, Being a Good Provider, Christianity, Rebellion, and Othering. These pathways were sometimes internalized, and at other times were rejected and utilized as counter-models for who the men wished to be. Navigating masculinity

was thus described as a process wherein individuals made personal decisions based on the multiple masculinities that they encountered during their development.

The masculinities that were described by the participants were not concrete personality structures or singular manners of being, but rather were multiple pathways that intersected and changed over time. Many participants within this study expressed either participating in or pursuing the values of more than one masculine identity. For some participants, they presented their identity as aligning with the values of Christianity or of Being a Good Provider, but would also recount their departure from these values in contexts such as military deployment or during times of emotional distress. Thus, male identity was experienced by participants as a set of pathways that were navigated, sometimes developmentally, but often in an intersecting and recursive process.

The concept of identity development occurring along particular pathways has been supported in the research literature, which emphasized the manner in which culture, social contexts, and personal values delineate paths that men can choose to take throughout their lives (McMillan & Paul, 2011; Reichert & Ravitch, 2010; Rios, 2009). By examining masculinity within the framework of pathways, the social limitations and the individual's personal choices can be examined side by side, rather than an emphasis being placed on either the individual or the social factors. In this manner, social pressure to behave in hypermasculine ways can be taken into consideration alongside the individual's ability to choose to reject or internalize these norms.

In a study on Jewish Male identity development, Reichert and Ravitch (2010) found that their participants elaborated on a theme of "if you want it, then you need it" (p. 111). According to the researchers, male identity is formed when men purposefully and selectively choose values, morals, and social groups from the options that are present for them during their development.

In Reichert and Ravitch's study, this selective process occurred within the context of the Jewish faith, with the young men determining their level of commitment to Jewish and to non-Jewish activities, and mindfully selecting and prioritizing the pieces of their identity that they found meaningful to their everyday life. Multiple identity paths were thus open for exploration for men, and the process of choosing was driven in part by internal forces and personal decisions regarding the type of men that they were attempting to embody.

Also noteworthy were the identity processes of Othering and Rebellion, which were described as reactionary processes in which masculinity was defined by the process of distancing from other men and particular forms of male behavior. Men expressed multiple reasons for choosing these pathways of departure, including feeling that stereotypical male behavior was misogynistic and exclusionary to certain men. These pathways were thus important for these men, as they served as alternatives to the pathways that were being overtly offered to them. Although these pathways differed through this departure or sense of separateness from other men, the behaviors within these pathways continued to align with the behaviors of other men. A key example being the man that described himself as separate from the popular boys at his school, yet described engaging in the exact same behavior with friends he met in his sports group.

The notion of pathways, or separate though interconnected notions of masculinity, is supported by the work of Wetherell and Edley (1999) who found that men's alignment toward masculinity fell into three camps: heroic positions, ordinary positions, and rebellious positions. The heroic positions aligned with men that embodied and espoused hypermasculine ideals, including control, dominance, and violence as a form of expressing their personal identity as men. The ordinary position held the men that did not identify with hypermasculine values but

continued to redefine masculinity to fit within the their “ordinary” lives and emphasize the values that they felt were most important to them (p. 17). Finally, the rebellious position was comprised of men whose masculinity superficially looked like “resistance to hegemonic masculinity” yet continued to espouse values that aligned with masculine stereotypes and ideals (p. 21).

Wetherell and Edley’s (1999) positions of masculinity align with those found within this study, as their study emphasized pluralistic masculinities and men’s interpersonal and intrapersonal process in navigating these understandings. The authors highlighted the importance of allowing discussions of hegemonic masculinity and male identity to be complicated by their personal affiliations towards it, giving space for multiple masculinities to come forward and be discussed openly. Through this process, individual male development can be examined alongside the social and contextual factors in which it occurs.

Shifting masculinities as part of development. Many of the participants emphasized a developmental transition that occurred in their masculine identity between adolescence and adulthood. Men identified this transition as a change from a Macho youth to a provider and family-oriented man. According to the participants, certain behaviors which were desired within one time frame became unfavorable in certain contexts, pushing the men to transition from one form of masculinity to another. These behaviors, in particular, were the hypersexuality and emotional stoicism often characterized by the Macho masculine idea. These characteristics, which were favorable in their school settings and in the military, would be eschewed in pursuit of the identity of the good provider who was seen as committed and responsible.

Masculinity was a developmental trajectory for the participants in the study, one in which particular markers served to emphasize the paths that should be chosen. In a study by Draper

(2003), the researcher found that men's roles as fathers were experienced as identity transition that were facilitated by cultural rituals involving the baby's birth. According to the author, a "pregnancy ritual" was described as a new cultural phenomenon that facilitated "men's invitation and involvement into pregnancy and birth but also into the previously considered female realm of physical and emotional care of children" (Draper, 2003, p. 74). Within Draper's study, transitions into fatherhood as a type of masculinity occurred through the cultural rituals of reading pregnancy books and taking Lamaze classes alongside pregnant partners. These cultural practices facilitated men's experiences of themselves as fathers, and ushered them away from previously held.

Men who do not transition into marriage or fatherhood also go through a transition in identity due to the absence of this particular pathway. According to Eck (2013), male participants who were never married emphasized an "identity turn" in which the men utilized their understandings of marriage as a cornerstone for understanding the way that singledom related to their personal identity. Eck described this as a process of using cultural artifacts, such as marriage, as an important bridge towards understanding the deviations that these men experienced from what their expected life trajectories. Thus, social pressure towards identities that would revolve around responsibility and commitment were contrasted by participants against their lived realities of "independence, repertoires of choice, and self-development" (Eck, 2013, p. 58). The identity that was formed for these men did not preclude the possibility of later marrying and becoming a provider, but rather served as an interim identity process as these men were middle-aged and no longer within the realm of adolescent masculinity.

Within the present study, masculinity was not experienced by men as a singular identity, rather masculinity was seen as a developing pathway wherein one form of being masculine

transitioned during important life transitions, such as from adolescents to adulthood. The present research supports this finding, as authors such as Eck (2013) and Draper (2003) found that men's identities transition and change during important milestones, or even in the absence of meeting these milestones. Masculinity may be viewed from this perspective: as a developmental trajectory in which cultural markers are utilized as a way of making meaning out of masculine identity, with social understandings of masculinity being utilized to understand men's roles through the course of their lives.

Following two paths. Men described separate identities of masculinity as occurring simultaneously for them during different experiences and events. The examples of following multiple paths included men who identified with the rebellious masculinity and utilized this rebellion to follow their preferred pathway towards manhood. Men within this study utilized the identity of rebellious masculinity as a tool for departing from ideas of youthful, stoic, and unattached masculinity as they established themselves within their identities as husbands and fathers. The choice to show affection towards spouses and to be committed and steadfast in marriage were seen as antithetical to the masculinities espoused by their peers. The men described their pathway as one of rebelling, whilst simultaneously choosing to follow a pathway towards masculinity that was preferable such as that of the provider.

Using the identity of masculinity in order to a preferred masculinity was described by McMillan and Paul (2011) in a qualitative research study on men in Central America. The authors stated that, in the context of the men's lives that were studied, "political violence ha[d] been internalized and reproduced as the natural order of things in private life," (McMillan & Paul, 2011, p. 375). Intimate partner violence, physical abuse of children, gang violence, and high levels of poverty were common in the communities in which the participants were

interviewed. The authors describe these men as engaging in personal rebellion towards these violent forms of masculinity, instead pursuing spiritual communities and involving themselves in the pan-Maya movement—a cultural movement to decolonialize the Mayan people. Thus, external pressures towards violent masculinities did not beget violent men, rather, a dynamic process of rebellion, fatherhood, and indigenous identity processes were chosen as preferred pathways by the men in this study.

Another phenomenon of multiple pathways of masculinity was described by men who would take particular contexts, such as military deployment or outings with friends, as a signal that they could switch between masculinities. Participants offered examples of purchasing sex despite the fact that this practice contradicted their values as partners and spouses. They emphasized how deployment or all male groups served as a signal for men that these masculine identities of commitment could be placed aside to pursue the hypersexuality or emotional stoicism that was expected of them within these contexts. Masculinity was not a linear trajectory, but rather pathways that could run parallel during men's lives depending on the circumstances.

According to Marttila (2008), a Finnish researcher, men's transition between identities was facilitated in a study by global economic forces and the use of business trips to engage in sex tourism. Marttila argued that men had the privilege to maneuver through various identities based on the level of privilege and wealth that they amassed, allowing them to go from family man and respected business person to sex buyer and sex tourist. Masculinity, power, and sexuality were seen as highly connected with men having liberties to maintain boundaried identities that ran simultaneously in a compartmentalized fashion. Marttila emphasized the manner in which this privilege of separation between different aspects of life was a unique experience for men from

privileged and wealthy nations. For particular subsections of privileged men, identity was fluid, with masculine identities being compartmentalized in pursuit of other masculine identities and behaviors that contradicted the first set of values.

The dual identity processes that occurred within men's personal religious affiliations and their sexual experiences were also emphasized by participants in this study. One participant in particular emphasized how the Christian masculinity that he was raised to follow was in contrast to the Macho ideals that were espoused on television and by his male peers, caused ambivalence as he attempted to live according to both value systems. Other participants emphasized seeing this dichotomy between masculine identities, and actively distancing themselves from one or the other in an attempt to avoid this dichotomous and "hypocritical" way of espousing masculinity. Christianity was seen as contrasting to many forms of masculinity that did not fit within a narrow view of family and sexuality.

Though little research exists on heteronormative men's sexuality, studies on gay and bisexual men's identity process regarding religion and sexuality offers support for the experiences of the heterosexual men in this study. In a study by Garcia, Muñoz-Laboy, Parker, and Wilson (2014) men "suspended religious beliefs when choosing sexual partners" (p. 604). Compartmentalization of the two identities took place during same-sex sexual encounters as they were perceived to be contradictory to their religious beliefs. This process was similar to the participants within the present study, wherein participants would describe compartmentalization as an important part of navigating these two identities simultaneously. Figueroa and Tasker (2014) found that Chilean gay men navigated a great deal of emotional turmoil due to the contradictions between their sexual identity and the Christian values in which they were raised. For heterosexual men in the present study, their sexuality was seen as contradictory to the

Christian ideals of celibacy and sexual prudence, thus causing a split in the men that desired to pursue both identities at the same time.

Funnels into masculine identities. Within this research, men described their understandings of the pressures they felt to fit into particular masculine ideals, with particular pressures and life circumstances delimiting the types of masculinities that they wished to embody. Participants discussed the manner in which their own personal values either meshed or collided with these social pressures, and the personal definitions of masculinity that they arrived at based on these limiting factors. Several participants emphasized a lack of mentorship in their youth as being connected to the types of masculinities they chose, emphasizing a lack of guidance as the root of their difficulty in fully embodying their preferred masculinity. Other men emphasized the manner in which military or all male peer groups created pressure towards particular actions or forms of masculinity that would not have been explored otherwise.

Rios (2009) studied how police surveillance funneled Black and Latino boys in inner city neighborhoods into hypermasculine identities as a form of self-preservation and protection. Rios found that the young men experienced constant surveillance by police as well challenges to their masculinity through homophobic and misogynistic language. Policing and the threat of violence served to emphasized “hypermasculinity as a form of coping, survival, and resistance” (Rios, 2009, p. 155). Rios found that the young men were aware of and desired masculinities that eschewed violence and instead focused on acquiring a job and maintaining positive relationships; however, the high rates of policing and poverty served as funnels leading back to hypermasculinity.

Social and contextual factors funnel men into particular forms of masculine expression, emphasizing and promoting masculinities that fit within social norms and stereotypes. As

highlighted by Kimmel (2010), male peer groups utilize misogyny and homophobia as a way of limiting the types of masculinities which are acceptable during childhood and adolescence. This funneling of masculinity into narrow categories that avoid qualities seen as traditionally feminine becomes the cornerstone for adult men's conceptualization of masculinity. The pathways that men select to pursue are limited by the social contexts in which they exist, with pressure towards hypermasculinity and devaluing femininity being the most common factors utilized to shape and influence young boys.

Masculine identities and commercial sex. For the participants in this study, multiple paths toward masculinity were connected to commercial sex. Men's identities as masculine were intertwined with the world of purchasing sex and having access to women's bodies through capitalist means. For the men in their youth, access to women in prostitution was a method of embodying the masculinity that was being espoused by peers. One participant emphasized this as he discussed his military experience of virgins being pressured to pursue sex, not because of sexual drives or needs, but because it would make them "a man."

For married men that were not out to prove their manhood, prostitution intersected with their identities as men through its use as an outlet for their sexual needs that were being unmet by their partners. The path of being a committed man did not bar the men from using prostitution, but rather, commercial sex was still woven into their experiences through the lens of men's perceived sexual needs and desires. Sexual dissatisfaction and sexual frustration in the marriage were seen as unmet needs that could not go unaddressed due to their importance to men's sexual needs. The pathways to masculinity that the men were describing continued to connect back to the act of purchasing sex and watching pornography, regardless of the differences between these types of masculinities.

When prostitution was seen as morally antithetical to a particular pathway, such as being a provider or a Christian man, the men discussed the way in which it related to other aspects of their identity. Participants described how they felt shame and guilt regarding their sex-buying practices, yet they were also able to name the reasons and justifications for why purchasing sex was acceptable despite these strong emotional responses. Although this behavior could be seen as contradictory and excusatory, it highlights the manner in which men simultaneously embody one masculine ideology while still maintaining access to other masculinity pathways. Thus, the process described previously of inhabiting multiple pathways also served to facilitate the connection to commercial sex regardless of the masculinity that was being embodied by the participant.

Although researchers have discussed motivation and men's understandings as to why they have purchased sex, the topic of male identity as a source of motivation has not been discussed in the literature. Despite stories and understandings around the prevalence of prostitution in circumstances where there are all male peer groups (London & Wilmoth, 2015), there is little research to identify and bring to light the ways in which masculine identity is a focal point of this increased use of commercial sex. Motivations for purchasing sex often focus on individual reasonings and align with men's personal understandings, however, the larger social contexts that are being described are often left unexplored. The participants within this study emphasized the larger social context of identity, and of having access to particular ways of being men through the use of commercial sex.

Belonging and Identity

An important emphasis in the narratives offered by the participants was the importance of belonging and fitting in as a vehicle for identity formation and learning about masculinity.

Participants recounted the way in which male peer groups and family members would emphasize particular masculinities and ways of being in order to facilitate a sense of connection. This process of understanding what was expected of them as men, however, did not always align with the personal values that the men held, leading to stories of disconnection. Each participant had different narratives that they shared that encompassed both folding into the expected behaviors of masculinity and rebelling against norms of masculinity that were placed on them. Within these stories, masculinity was shown to be transmitted through the process of belonging, fitting in, and being connected or disconnected.

Within research on belonging and social development, fitting in has recently been defined as an act of disavowing or changing one's personal beliefs to fit in with peer groups and gain favor (Brown, 2017). In contrast, social researcher Brown (2017) defines belonging as an act of being present and genuine to one's personal values, belief systems, and experiences within social interactions. According to Brown, fitting in is associated with narratives of disconnection and vying for acceptance without fully being able to explore the individual factors that make a person unique. Belonging, however, is associated with higher levels of overall well-being due to the personal insight and exploration that can occur in the context of being fully present in relationships and having genuine relationships that are shaped by one's personal values and experiences.

The tools of connection and disconnection were discussed as part of the process through which the men in this study learned the different rules for masculinity during their development. For participants, they recognized their behaviors as either allowing them to be part of the male peer groups that they saw, or as causing them to be on the outskirts of the definitions of manhood. Examples were given where the men would shift their personal actions, or develop

personal goals that included these modeled behaviors in order to fit in. Sex and sexuality were particularly salient for the participants in this study, as they discussed the multiple ways in which sex and pornography were central topics in male peer discussions.

For the participants, their initial social engagements were predicated on the notion that they should hide the aspects of themselves that might lead to further disconnection and alienation from male peer groups and family members. Kimmel (2010) described this dynamic at length in discussing men's homophobic slurs and posturing that occurs in male groups. According to Kimmel, the main purpose of this type of male posturing is generally an attempt to be accepted within established male norms, and to identify with a masculinity that will facilitate fitting in with other young men. There is extensive amount of energy expended on silencing or minimizing behavior that might bely any type of quality that may be deemed as feminine or un-masculine by others.

This process of fitting in becomes particularly salient when it comes to the importance of sex and sexuality, which serve as an important cornerstone, if not the keystone, to men's identity development (Cohan, 2009). According to Cohan, male sexuality is constructed and shaped by the social practices between young men; within these relationships he found that "conquest" and sexual activity were an intense focus for young boys and that this social process was described as being secondary to the young men's individual sex drive. Furthermore, the sexual practices that were discussed and emphasized by young men were often misogynistic and sexually objectifying, almost exclusively rewarding and celebrating sexuality that devalued women and minimized emotional relationships. Sexuality and sex were central to the process of fitting in and belonging for men during their formative years, and this process created a foundation for

how men viewed their emotional and relational lives as they continued into adulthood (Cohan, 2009).

Commercial sex as fitting in. An important component of the data within this research was commercial sex as a social mechanism that facilitated the transmission of masculine identity. As some men described, their initial forays into the world of sex, pornography, and prostitution, were closely linked to desires to fit in with their male peers. Male pressure on other men to recount sexual escapades, real or imagined, delineated a course for sexual development that affected the lives of the participants well into adulthood. This included examples such as the participant that purchased sex due to a desire, as an adult, to feel a sense of belonging with other sexually active adults, down to the participants that described going to a brothel as a young man with a group of peers to mutually experience what “women were really about.”

The most prominent examples were the descriptions the participants gave of their adolescence and of military experiences, which overtly discussed the importance of losing one’s virginity in gaining social standing amongst other men. For participants, the value that they placed on sexual relationships with women were initially predicated on their desire to fit in and bond with the men that they were surrounded by. Though some feminist theorists have discussed the importance of commercial sex in male in-group and out-group dynamics (Dworkin, 1993, Farley, 2004), overall the topic is ill-explored in research that focuses on male sexuality and commercial sex.

One particular study researched a form of commercial sex in Thailand known as flower drinking and found that part of its significance to men in that area was the importance of this social practice in being included or excluded from social, financial, and political spheres (Bedford & Hwang, 2011). According to the authors, men engaging in flower drinking felt

pressured to do so as it going to flower drinking establishments was a regular practice for conducting business and engaging in male social bonding. This practice facilitated the exclusion of women from entering or advancing in business or politics, as well as limiting men that were unwilling to participate in this practice. Commercial sex in this cultural example was placed squarely in the center of male social bonding and personal relationships.

Though flower drinking was studied due to its central role in social interactions within Thailand, commercial sex in the United States may have many important similarities. The findings within this research study suggest that there are male bonding rituals that are emphasized, and in some instances, required of men to access certain male peer groups. Within this study, the practice of using and exposing other boys to pornography was seen as a method for establishing social capital and to socially connect with other men. Prostitution and visiting brothels and strip clubs was also described similarly by some participants. The impacts and implications of male relational development and male sexual development being so intimately tied to the commercial sex industry requires further research and emphasis.

Commercial Sex

For the participants in this study, the importance and prevalence of pornography was connected to the manner in which it threaded through other experiences within the commercial sex industry. Participants recounted the manner in which pornography was intimately connected to the practices of purchasing sex, and the pursuit of commercial sex in other avenues. Furthermore, the participants described the manner in which porn and commercial sex was ubiquitous in their daily lives. Stories regarding being exposed to pornography included discussions of playing at the pool, waiting for the school bus, or even going to work for a family

friend. These exposures and porn itself was normalized by the people that they encountered, as there was an expectation to seek out these experiences by peers, and in some cases by family.

Exposure and normalization. Participants in this study emphasized the manner in which purchasing sex and utilizing pornography was considered a normal part of male behavior. They recounted both childhood stories of being exposed to pornography and supported in their exploration of commercial sex by peers and sometimes by older mentors or even parents. Commercial sex was equally normalized and emphasized in adulthood, creating a long-standing process in which purchasing sex, using pornography, and visiting strip clubs was equated with normal male behavior and therefore expected in order to participate in the world of men.

Within the narratives of these men, we see the way in which exposure to pornography is connected to their early childhood sexual development, and to that of their peers. Presently, studies show that unwanted exposure to pornography on the internet is as high as 25% with the majority of those exposed being boys under the age of 18 (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2003). When the stories of participants are taken into consideration, the percentage is probably higher of pornography exposure that is not considered unwanted, and also the exposure that occurs outside of the realm of the internet. Young men regularly encounter commercial sex, and the process of normalization for prostitution and purchasing sex occurs before and during adolescence.

This process of normalization was further emphasized in the narratives of the men, as they described fitting in and bonding with other men through the use of pornography and discussions of commercial sex. As expressed in the previous section, pornography was described by the men in this study as a source of connection and bonding with other men. In this manner, commercial sex was not only ubiquitous, but also pointed to the manner in which it was inextricable from identity development in the present context of manhood. In studies on men

who buy sex, researchers emphasized that for a portion of these men, the purchasing of sex is seen as a normal behavior for men, even if it does not coincide with their own personal behavior and values (Farley et al., 2011). Sexual objectification and the use of commercial sex is experienced and reinforced as the norm for men, and therefore even when it does not align with their personal views of women and sexuality, they are still normalizing this experience for other men as it has been normalized for them during their development.

Development of the sex buyer. The participants in this study emphasized transitions that occurred as they developed comfort and knowledge within the commercial sex industry. The participants emphasized the importance of normalization of pornography as an initial step into the world of commercial sex, which was then followed by varying levels of exposure with strip clubs, brothels, and prostitution. For some of the participants, this connection was clear, as they found prostitution through their discussions and use of pornography, whereas with others they felt pornography served as a stepping stone towards purchasing sex. This finding is supported by the research of Farley et al. (2017) who found that sex buyers had higher rates of pornography use than their counterparts that did not purchase sex.

The findings within this study also suggest that once sex purchasing has begun, there is a normalization and a thrill-seeking that becomes associated with continuing to become adept at purchasing sex. Participants recounted learning the nuances of purchasing sex online, or at different venues, and understanding their personal preferences and how to seek out their preferred experience. This further included altering their demeanors to illicit the desired encounters with women that they were purchasing sex from. Other authors note similar narratives when interviewing men who purchase sex; where men describe becoming knowledgeable and, in some instances, offering other sex buyers on how to navigate the system

(Z. K. Jones, 2013; Milrod & Monto, 2012; Sanders, 2008). Sex-buying and men's engagement with purchasing sex may be understood as a developmental trajectory through different comfort levels with sexual objectification, purchasing sex, and their own sense of values and morals that allow for this type of practice to take place.

Men had varying levels of ambivalence with their personally held morals and the harms that occurred within prostitution. Research shows that most men are aware of the harms that occur within prostitution, regardless of whether or not they purchase sex themselves (Busch et al., 2002; Farley et al., 2011; Sanders, 2008). The process by which men continue to purchase sex and reason through their ambivalence has previously been attributed to men shedding the overly conservative Christian values, and mindfully avoiding women that are being harmed by prostitution (Sanders, 2008). However, this research points to a more complex process in which men continue to feel there are harms that befall women, and continue to purchase sex from women in vulnerable circumstances, but engage in a rationalization process where they discount these experiences due to their gained expertise within sex buying. Participants relayed stories in which they would engage in particular sex-buying practices that they felt assured them they would not be transgressing on their personal morals, which facilitated continuing to buy sex despite the inherent harms they continued to witness and be aware of.

Salient to men's continued development as sex buyers was the topic of the thrill that they experienced when purchasing sex. Participants described this emotional thrill as the process that facilitated their continued engagement with commercial sex. For some men, they stated that this initial excitement was the highest point of their experience, as they did not feel the sexual encounter delivered what they had initially hoped. They equated the thrill with their reasons for purchasing sex long after they had decided it did not fit the life they wished to live, their identity

as men, nor their hopes for the sexual lives. Notably, one participant further explained that the pursuit of sex that was on the outskirts of normative behavior, in this case purchasing sex from a minor, was also due to the thrill that they experienced when planning their sexual encounters.

Researchers discuss men as being motivated to buy sex due to finding it exciting (Farley et al., 2011; Sanders, 2008); however, little research elucidates the connection between the thrill and men's continued engagement in sex buying despite wishing to stop. Oversimplifying excitement and a desire for newness misses the complexity of the thrill, as it seemed to connect buyers with both their motivation and with the negative feelings that they associated with addiction processes and a desire to stop purchasing sex. In this way, rather than simply being a motivator, their excitement around planning to buy sex also served as something that continued propelling them forward as sex buyers.

Motivations for purchasing and rationalizations. Participants in this study offered many different types of reasons and rationales for purchasing sex. Although some of these were framed as motivations, other men described these processes as rationalizations that helped ease their personal negative feelings regarding having purchased sex. Men were ambivalent around their descriptions of motivations and rationalizations, often using the phrase “I don’t want to make excuses” or similar turns of phrase to indicate their ambivalence regarding their descriptions of why they engaged with commercial sex. The ambivalence they described teetered from descriptions of lacking personal control and accountability for their actions, and on the other hand being part of a system that facilitated their access to purchasing and accessing sex through consumerist means.

Commercial sex and sexual objectification was woven into many of the stories that men described regarding their personal identity formation as men. Purchasing sex was described as

allowing them to access pathways of masculinity that they felt might escape them otherwise, and that were part of their human condition. These included narratives of young boys going to brothels to not miss out on discovering “what women are really about,” as well as older men using prostitution to shed their virginity and feel as though they had completed a step towards their manhood. Other men described the importance of sexually gratifying women and how they purchased sex to access this when it was not occurring within their marriages. These fantasies that were created by themselves and by the women they purchased sex from were an access point into their personal identities as men, and not just a form of sexual release. The men were aware that these fantasies were constructed and paid for, yet also held that they felt satisfied in pursuing these fantasies due to their importance to their lives as men.

Research that discusses and explores men’s reasons for purchasing sex fails to fully account for the manner in which sex buying is interwoven through men’s identity formation process. However, some authors (Sanders, 2008) have concluded that many men often find themselves unsatisfied after their sexual encounters with commercial sex after their encounter is completed. In understanding men’s desires to meet particular identity goals through commercial sex, it offers a new explanation in regard to this lack of satisfaction. Men seeking to validate their manhood through commercial sex described having this need go unmet in these encounters, leaving them with feelings of either emptiness or continued dissatisfaction in themselves or their relationships.

Men expressed feeling emotionally jarred when their motivations or rationalizations were exposed as fantasies by either themselves or the person they were purchasing sex from. Men described that the act of having a woman ask for more money for sex acts, handing the woman the money directly, or having the woman not meet their sexual and emotional expectations

disrupted the men's fantasies and caused negative emotional responses. They also had negative emotional experiences when the women would disclose the difficulty of their circumstances, or when they had to account for their actions of purchasing sex to others, including wives, girlfriends, or family members. In these moments, the participants described having "the veil" removed, and having their reality and their motivations exposed as rationalizations.

Men's Views of Women

Men recounted views of women that designated one of two paths: the sexualized woman or the nurturing woman. These narratives aligned with the understandings provided by theories and research regarding the Madonna–Whore dichotomy and men's beliefs regarding women (Bareket, Kahalon, Shnabel, & Glick, 2018). Bareket et al. found within their research that men who reported higher levels of adherence to this dichotomous belief system also reported lower levels of satisfaction in their relationships with women. In this way, men's belief system regarding women as existing within this dichotomous stereotype affected the women they encountered as well as their own emotional and relational experience. This splitting conceptualization of women into two categories is a phenomenon that affected men's lives beyond their experiences within commercial sex.

Sexualizing women. Most of the discussions centered around the concept of the sexual woman, with men discussing why they felt women fell into this category and how they personally related to them. Participants described women within this category as embodying sexual fantasies and serving to fulfill men's sexual needs. The idea that these women were there for men's sexual needs was discussed regardless of whether it was women in commercial sex, women in bars, or the married woman that one man described meeting at the gym. For these men, relationships with these women were over once their sexual and emotional needs were

gratified. These types of relationships were framed from the perspective of men's perceived need for sex and utilized stereotypes and generalizations about women in order to reinforce this perspective.

Men described women that they sexualized through the use of stereotypes and generalizations. Men typified women that they sexualized as being morally misguided, lacking in self-respect, or being predatory. Within the descriptions utilized, the men recounted stories of how these women were either fallen from grace due to difficult circumstances, and that their morality had been altered due to their life circumstances. This ideology of the "fallen angel" is an old stereotype utilized to reinforce understandings of women as innocent beings that do not have the full range of moral understanding as their male counterparts (Bareket et al., 2018). Men also utilized descriptions of women as predatory and morally corrupt, demarcating the manner in which sexualized women were sexual due to moral or personal failings (Bareket et al., 2018).

Through these broad generalizations, men could categorize their sexual encounters with women inside and outside of commercial sex along the same lines. Men within the study emphasized the manner in which they believed that sexual encounters with women through commercial sex were similar to the experience of dating online, finding sexual partners in bars, or attempting to date while in the process of divorce. The men's primary understandings of these sexual encounters were transactional and focused on the sexual nature of their goals, and the relational dynamics that were occurring within these encounters were secondary if they were noted at all. Thus, women inside and outside of the commercial sex industry were viewed along the same dichotomies and men's sexual goals were used to determine the moral standing of the women being scrutinized.

Men's generalization of women into the category of sexual object allowed men to view women as tools for attaining sexual goals, while still believing they were showing respect during these encounters. However, studies show that men's sexual objectification of women is an obstruction towards developing healthy and fulfilling relationships with their female partners (Bareket et al., 2018). According to hooks (2004), men are socialized to expect sex and sexual encounters to supplement the emotional stagnation that is required of them to embody masculinity. Men are asked, from an early age, to limit their emotional experiences to anger and aggression, as well as foregoing physical affection from anyone that is not a girlfriend or intimate partner. hooks (2004) explained that men's pursuit of sex stems from this harmful socialization practice and facilitates a damaging cycle in which men seek emotional and relational connection through the act of sex alone, and the less it delivers the more they engage in sexual behavior to attempt to fill this void. Men's categorization of women into two different subclasses thus perpetuates patriarchal practices and ultimately harms men's ability to engage in meaningful relationships.

Men's stories of rejection and fear of disconnection were highly connected to their accounts of women that they placed in the sexual category. For participants, sexual or emotional rejection from women was described as difficult and sometimes as intolerable. Participants felt that women carried the power in relationships due to the perceived role they carried as gatekeepers of sex. Participants felt that men were in a position of having less power and control, due to their perceived need for sex, of which they perceived women as either not having or having to a lesser degree. Men would describe this need as being based on sexual urges, but also in regard to identity formation. Men who could not fulfill their sexual needs did not fit into the pathways of manhood that were socially constructed. Commercial sex served as a way of

bypassing the possibility of rejection, and therefore alleviating their stress and fear of being sexually or emotionally dismissed.

The nurturing woman. Men also detailed their relationships with women that were emotional caregivers to them. These relationships with women, who men described as being less motivated by sex than their sexualized female counterparts, were wives, mothers, and also close friends. Participants described the importance of having these emotionally present relationships for their own relational needs but also as a way of fulfilling their roles as men on multiple levels. Multiple pathways that were discussed by participants involved having a long term committed partner that took on wifely duties while the men were able to embody the masculinities that they were pursuing. The women that were seen as partners and as nurturers were thus equally objectified and connected to men's needs, as they represented extensions of the men on varying levels.

Men pursued partners and wives that could be seen as extensions of their own value and identity as men. This included the participant that elaborated on his feelings that his girlfriend should reflect the value he placed upon himself as a person, and that dating women "below" this standard lessened his status as a man. The demarcations of what constituted women "below" a certain category were named by the participant as being race, class, and social hierarchy. Women within the category of nurturer were thus not only burdened with the emotional needs of the men and their families, but also were seen as reflections of men's personal value. The girlfriends, fiancées, and wives thus served as status symbols and as markers of men's ability to find partners that reflected their worth as men.

Notable within these relationships was the moments men described in which they became aware of the mutuality, or the humanity, of the partners they were encountering. For at least two

of the men, there was a significant moment in which they recognized that what they were seeking in relation to women was not a wife as an extension of their identity as men, but rather a partner that they felt they wished to spend time with. The significance of these moments for the men that discussed them was relayed as being in recognizing that they were seeking mutual friendships and connection, which altered their initial understandings and what they had been taught regarding the institution of marriage and what their role was as husband and provider. These examples serve to emphasize the way in which men are taught to view women along the narrow demarcations of the Madonna–Whore dichotomy, while also offering examples of how change can occur within these ideologies.

Friend zone. Within the narratives about women were also discussions regarding women that the men perceived as friends, and that did not exist within the other two categories (sexualized or nurturing). Participants described these relationships as meaningful to them, as one man in particular described these friendships as being deeper than his friendships with men. The qualities of these friendships, however, were also depicted as a status of the women not fitting into the other two categories, and therefore existing in a place where they could be viewed as friends. If men could not sexualize these women, or did not feel they met their desires to marry or engage in a long term relationship, then these women could exist as friends outside of those two categories. For the participants, they found that these types of relationships were less stressful, as they did not have to worry about possible rejection.

Another manner in which these relationships were described was as a waiting period in which the men were waiting to become either a sexual or a long term partner. For one participant in particular, he described comparing himself to partners that his female friends had, and also wishing to prove his worth as a potential partner despite having already been rejected.

These particular types of relationships were reminiscent of what researchers find regarding men's pursuit of women even after they have initially rejected them and said no (Gutzmer, Ludwig-Barron, Wyatt, Hamilton, & Stockman, 2016). According to Gutzmer et al. (2016) men who experience rejection do not always allow women to have the space and the boundaries that they wish to create, and instead create opportunities to pressure women into meeting their relational or sexual goals. Male friendships with women served as a space for this type of pressuring to take place.

Men's Emotional Lives

Participants emphasized two large threads when discussing their emotional experiences, one being their difficulties with isolation and depression, and the other being their experiences of love. The men in this study described a range of depressive symptoms, from emotional isolation to hopelessness and suicidal thoughts. These experiences were exacerbated by the lack of support that they experienced from their surrounding social networks, as well as their difficulty accessing these supports even when they did exist. Within these stories were also woven accounts of addiction, and the witnessing of domestic violence at home between caregivers. In contrast to these stories of hardship and difficulty, the men also discussed the importance of love and its significance of intimacy in their lives.

Love. Participants described love within their families of origin, within their committed relationships, and within their friendships. Participants described these important relationships, or the lack thereof, as extremely salient to their lives as men and how they framed sexual encounters. Men described experiencing and learning how to love from their family of origin and discussed the rules and demarcations that were expected of them as men in expressing love. Love could not be expressed to friends in an open manner, and men should not be openly

affectionate or warm to others in public. hooks (2004) described these rules around masculine love as being the undercurrent that drives men's isolation and fuels the depression and anger that are common in men. However, even within this research men discusses abandoning or shedding those rules in order to seek out relationships and closeness that did not abide by the rules that were taught to them.

Love and intimacy were defined by participants as the intersection of time and commitment. For participants, the development of love and intimacy within sex were generally reserved for the relationships with women wherein they felt they had taken the time to develop this relational closeness. Though love was described as occurring between same sex friendships, intimacy was only discussed in relation to female partners, as men stated that these experiences were often sexual in nature. According to Real (1997), the reservation of intimacy as a purely sexual act is part of how toxic masculinity is socialized in men, as it requires a degree of emotional distance within friendships and relationships that are not sexual. Sex becomes the avenue through which emotional difficulties can be expressed, and sexual partners become the sole bearers of men's emotional difficulties.

Men expressed ambivalence when it came to the relationship between intimacy, love, and commercial sex. Some participants felt strongly regarding the ability to seek out intimacy within commercial sex, and recounted purchasing sex precisely to seek out this feeling. Jones and Hannem (2018) found that this engaging in intimacy within commercial sex requires a willingness to accept the scripted role of the experience, and to enter into scripts they termed "delusions of mutuality" that ranged from the women pretending to be intimate, to the men pretending to believe that the women's intimacy was genuine. The authors clarified that even

within their research, some participants felt strongly that they had experienced authentic mutuality.

Depression and isolation. Issues of depression, isolation, and exposure to domestic violence were common among participants in this study. The emotional concerns that men described centered mostly on extreme social and emotional isolation, with some men having no people which they utilized for emotional support in their daily lives. Participants described this isolation as normative for them, but also reflected on the difficulty in overcoming hardships when they felt there was no one to provide support. Men's masculine identities aligned with the need to be an island unto themselves, which facilitated the isolation and in some cases exacerbated it due to a lack of skills in how to use the supports and services that were available to them.

Masculinity has been described as inherently isolating, and has been connected to the understanding of depression as a constant in many men's lives (hooks, 2004; Real, 1997). Men's socialization prepares them for a life in which they will be emotionally removed from many of the people that they encounter, with the exception of a few sexual relationships wherein they will seek the emotional closeness and solace they have been lacking otherwise. This, however, will continue to not be fulfilling as the skills required to discuss emotional experiences, be vulnerable, and engage in relational closeness have not been developed in many men. Within this study, we saw this trajectory for men as one of lacking personal insight and desiring new ways of engaging with others, but being uncertain where to find the resources to learn these tools.

For some of the men in this study, domestic violence made these points more salient as they were seeking guidance for how to distance themselves from these painful past experiences.

One participant in particular emphasized his fear of becoming abusive like his father, while other participants simply attempted to distance themselves from these examples by seeking new models of masculinity. According to Kernsmith (2006), witnessing domestic violence in childhood was not a guarantee for later life violence, but that the witnessing of domestic violence in the home causes a particular mindset which creates a heightened vigilance later in life. There are significant emotional impacts that occur when any person experiences domestic violence in their home life. For these men, the impacts manifested themselves as withdrawing from emotional closeness in order to try and avoid recreating these childhood relationships, as well as feeling a lack of mentorship or understanding regarding the masculinities they wished to embody in their adult lives.

Negative coping strategies. The participants recounted having a dearth of resources to contend with the mental health stressors that they were attempting to overcome in their daily lives. For the participants, there was not only a lack of professional resources that they felt able to access, but also their own social support networks, if they had any, did not sufficiently support them or offer space for difficult emotional topics to be discussed. For some of the men, they connected these mental health concerns and the lack of resources directly to their use of pornography and prostitution. Participants stated that they felt the use of commercial sex, and sex in general, was seen as a way of either escaping or avoiding the problems that they were dealing with in their daily lives.

Men described sex as a common form of coping, as they would often engage in the excitement of pursuing sexual encounters during times of emotional duress or change. For some of the men, this connection was clear, as in the examples of the young man that had recently returned from a missionary trip and found himself lost and emotionally isolated. Other examples

were of men who were having sexual difficulties, or who were experiencing high levels of relational tension within their relationship. For these men, they discussed seeking pornography and prostitution as a way of contending with their difficulties and feeling that commercial sex held an answer to their problems.

According to Real (1997), men are typically ill-prepared in adulthood to contend with emotional and relational difficulties due to the socialization process that they move through in their youth. Men are generally socialized to embody stoicism and an un-emotional front, unless that emotion is aggression and anger. Men are also taught to isolate emotionally from others, as the expression of emotions is viewed as a feminine trait and generally leads to bullying and peer ostracization (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Real, 1997). The exceptions to these rules of emotional isolation tend to rest in the use of drugs and alcohol, as well as sex, as a way of developing closeness or open communication with other people (Real, 1997). The findings within this study serve as another data point in the oeuvre of research which points to men's uses of negative coping strategies in an attempt to cope with the emotional and relational stressors of adhering to masculinity.

Cultivating Change

Due to the circumstances that these men were in, having been court referred to classes due to having purchased sex, many of them recounted stories of change and accountability as they discussed commercial sex. For many of these men, prior to entering into a class that taught them about the harms of prostitution, they had attempted to quit on their own, with one man in particular stating that he had been successful in doing so prior to attending the class. According to Sanders (2008), many sex buyers do not wish to continue their relationship to commercial sex but rather see it as temporary or as a shameful experience that they wish to end. Other men view

it as normal, and within this study those who did so offered that the class they engaged in allowed them to see the way in which purchasing sex connected them to the harms of prostitution and the harms of toxic masculinity.

Regardless of what men thought regarding stopping their sex buying practices, there was an emphasis on the importance of abstinence and removing commercial sex either partially or completely from their lives in order to promote continued abstinence from purchasing sex. One man described continuing to have feelings and thoughts about purchasing sex, and utilizing daily tasks and spiritual involvement in order to have a sense of distraction or a more fulfilling activity to engage in. Regardless of the methods they used to maintain abstinence, the men discussed the importance of maintaining distance and space from commercial sex as many felt that pornography, prostitution, and strip clubs were all intimately connected and would lead to behavior that they wished to discontinue.

Interventions to reduce commercial sexual exploitation. Men in this study named arrests and having to disclose sexual behaviors to partners and family members as the most important steps in moving away from commercial sex and towards sexual practices that aligned with their personal values. Participants felt ambivalence in regards to the arrest, but simultaneously felt a sense of personal alignment with no longer purchasing sex which resulted from the arrest. In a study done by Farley et al. (2017), researchers found that participants described public shaming and police intervention as some of the highest motivators for discontinuing their sex buying practices. Though police interventions were not ideal, they served to facilitate accountability for the men which was ultimately helpful and in some cases transformative.

The arrest removed anonymity for the men that were purchasing sex, and in caused stigma and guilt to occur. According to some of the participants, it was not the stigma of purchasing sex that was problematic for them, but rather, the stigma of having been arrested for purchasing sex. Men discussed how purchasing sex among all male peer groups was not considered particularly shameful or stigmatized. Rather, men found the issue to be having been caught purchasing sex, and the public accountability that occurred afterwards to be the source of the stigma. The ability to control anonymity and to manage who knows what type of information regarding their sex lives was thus an important aspect of men traversing the world of sex buying. Removing this barrier of anonymity facilitated the change that the men later stated was helpful in altering their behaviors.

As commercial sex generally creates an experience in which men can remain anonymous during their sexual encounters, facilitating a system where anonymity is revoked would lower the amount of commercial sexual exploitation that occurs. As Marttila (2008) pointed out in a study of Finnish sex buyers, the process of sex-buying is appealing due to men's power in being able to navigate in and out of that world with relative anonymity. For the women in commercial sex, they are not afforded any of this luxury, as they generally are displayed and followed with little capacity for remaining anonymous or separating their lives from the commercial sex industry. Creating programs that remove men's anonymity from sex buying practices would facilitate a new dynamic, which would, according to research, reduce the rates at which men buy sex.

Expanding masculinities. The process of initiating change for participants was not a singular process, nor was it a complete abandonment of old masculine ideals. Rather, the process involved a reconceptualization and an expansion of the definitions of masculinity to see themselves reflected in this idea of manhood without having to live under the toxic and

conscripted rules generally associated with masculinity. Men attempted to accomplish these tasks through the process of finding role models and exploring new ways of relating to themselves, to male peers, and to women.

In a study by Reichert and Ravitch (2010), the authors found that Jewish youth utilized their religious affiliations as a form of transgressive masculinity that did not align with dominant patriarchal norms. The authors found that the young men felt freer to explore their personal values as men and to also question dominant social norms through the use of their religious traditions and the peers they had within these groups. The ability to see their experiences reflected in the traditions of others and to see masculinity as a broader experience than what was depicted by peers at school or on the media was an important component of their ability to expand their personal definitions of masculinity. The young men in the study distinguished their actions from those of their peers, and wove their sense of belonging in their Jewish community into their understandings of what it meant to be men.

In a different study on fatherhood in the lives of Central American men, the importance of culture and tradition was also discussed as a key in developing a more complex masculinity that did not include violence. According to McMillan and Paul (2011), participants recounted the ways in which their roles as fathers differed from dominant culture due to their decision to not use violence as a way of disciplining their children. These men discussed the importance of choosing a masculinity that deviated from their experience of men in their lives, and instead focused on mutual relationships and no physical violence. The men drew from their cultural practices as indigenous people and their communities that they were embedded in to learn and establish new forms of fatherhood, which moved against the violent and patriarchal norms of gang violence and dominance that were prominent in their home towns in Central America.

Identity development for men in this study was a lifelong process, which also meant that their ability to alter and expand their masculinities was occurring even later in life. The process of expanding masculinity was described as less dependent on age, and more constrained by the ability to find models, mentors, and supports for this expansion to occur. Some men described finding these in their everyday life and enjoying the benefits of being able to see their role as men expanded and more complex. However, other men described having a difficult time finding role models and points of departure from the masculinities to which they were accustomed. The differences between men who could and could not find the needed communities to expand their personal understandings was a combination of available resources, and also available communities of other men engaging in similar work.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

Focus group. This study took the unique approach of analyzing the initial set of individual interview data, and presenting a deeper set of questions to a focus group of sex buyers to validate or change the direction the data analysis was taking. The approach facilitated the saturation of the secondary theme, Fitting In, which facilitated an exploration of how the commercial sex industry is seen as a cornerstone of male bonding during adolescent years. Other sections equally benefitted from this deeper analysis of the data through the focus group discussion, adding a depth that would not have been possible without the inclusion of a focus group halfway through the process.

Diverse sample. With the exception of police intervention and taking a subsequent class tailored to sex buyers, the participants were diverse demographically and ideologically. They differed in terms of generational cohorts, countries of origin, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and

socioeconomic class. This diversity facilitated the inclusion of cultural context in the data on commercial sex and masculinity, as men offered diverse narratives of their encounters with pornography and prostitution based on their lived experience. Thus, though they shared the experience of having police intervention, their narratives and meaning making process about prostitution and masculinity differed sufficiently to allow comparisons between buyers.

Focused scope. The study's focus on men who purchased sex and were subsequently arrested or had police intervention was a unique strength for this study. The participants were able to share about how the arrest and the subsequent class impacted their view of themselves as men and their view of themselves as men who purchased sex. The qualitative nature of the study allowed for participants to share information about themselves regarding their arrest experience that was not originally in the research questions, but that ultimately helped inform the direction of the study and the subsequent understandings.

Limitations

Sample generalizability. The methodological focus of IPA on a specific sample facilitated a depth of understanding of these men's lived experience. However, this also serves to limit the generalizability to the larger population of men, and to sex buyers in general. For example, participants in this study may have considered the issue of masculinity and commercial sex due to their involvement with their classes, while other sex buyers would not have this same experience. Participants outside of this small pool may have presented their sex buying behavior in a different light. However, the research has established the manner in which different sex buyers transmit different cultural ideologies to one another in various fashions, and any demographic category of sex buyers would have similar difficulties in establishing generalizability without a large national or international sampling.

Recruitment. Participants for this study were recruited from men who had been caught purchasing sex, and all of them had completed a program geared towards sex buyers. This specificity of recruitment necessarily influences the types of participants in the study and the subsequent data gathered. Studies of men who purchase sex have utilized various recruitment strategies, with a common strategy being the use of men who are active in online forums. Though these various strategies for recruitment were considered, the specific sampling of men who have graduated a program for sex buyers was chosen to add to diversity to the already existing literature on sex buyers and prostitution.

Ideological bias. As expressed in the literature review, the topic of sex work versus commercial sexual exploitation is a controversial and heavily debated topic. Although some researchers claim to move towards this topic with “objectivity” in their understanding, IPA and phenomenological methodologies present this “objectivity” as an unreachable. Ideological neutrality is construed as a deceptive goal, as it makes invisible the ideologies of the researchers and authors utilizing this positionality. Within this framework, the ideological stance of the researcher that prostitution is exploitation has thus been overtly stated and acts as a limitation of the study. Within qualitative research, it should be understood that foregrounding and naming the biases is not a method of undercutting or getting ahead of prejudice and limitations, but rather a way of naming them so that they are not invisible within the study. In this manner, future researchers may contend with this ideological stance easily and readily, promoting transparent discussions in which ideological stances are named rather than ignored or made invisible.

Future Research

This qualitative study serves as a possible starting point for future research in the area of masculinity, as well as in studies addressing the motivations of sex buyers. Previous research on masculinity and men’s experience of their identity development has not included a thorough

examination of how the commercial sex industry shapes this particular experience. Feminist authors have tackled the topic of theorizing and developing conceptualizations of the effects of prostitution on men's sexual experience, but there has been little to no research, nor discussion, of identity development when it comes to pornography and prostitution. This is ultimately becoming more important with the advent of free online pornography, as access to the commercial sex industry has fundamentally changed.

Furthermore, studies on men's motivations of sex buying and engagement with pornography have not addressed the question of motivation as it pertains to men's shared experience of porn. Though some studies have briefly mentioned men not endorsing this as important to them (Farley et al., 2011), this study showed that when asked in a more general way, men were readily able to provide examples of how commercial sex was integral to their experience of fitting in and bonding with other men. The notion that men purchase sex for internal motivators alone, or due to the allure of the commercial sex industry, must be expanded to include the socio-cultural factors that also drive men into the use of commercial sex.

Conclusion

This study offers support to the idea that there is a direct connection between male sexual identity development and the various facets of the commercial sex industry. Masculinity develops in a context in which sex buying and objectifying women is not only an option, but is a celebrated and accepted part of certain subsections of male culture. The various paths that men described that lead them to masculinity were often interwoven into practices that included purchasing sex. For men wishing to embody virility and machismo, purchasing sex allowed for access to sex without the fear of rejection by female partners. For men wishing to maintain their role as providers, paid sex offered them sexual outlets when they felt dissatisfied with wives or

partners. In this manner, men's relational difficulties towards female partners could be circumvented and their identities as men preserved.

Commercial sex also functioned interpersonally for men's access to their identity as masculine, as men utilized pornography, strip clubs, and prostitution to fit in with all male peer groups. Being exposed to pornography by men and bonding over sexual images of women was a common theme discussed by participants. These encounters were described as centering around masculinity and the idea that male development was connected to exposure to commercial sex. Commercial sex was seen as a method of indoctrinating men into the world of masculinity and being able to transition into manhood when consensual or relational sex was not readily accessible. Commercial sex thus played an integral role in the capacity of men to relate to one another.

Hegemonic masculinity included the commercial sex industry as a point of access into masculine identity and male sexuality. Commercial sex as a factor that directly affected their personal views of themselves and others as men. In contrast to the present psychological research that emphasizes the importance of biology and evolution on male sexuality, this study supported a much more nuanced view of male sexuality that included social and environmental factors in men's sexuality. Specifically, men reported requiring sexual access to women in order to fulfill their identities as men, and to maintain male peer relationships that focused on discussions of sex. Male involvement with commercial sex was an access point into these masculinities that facilitated the avoidance of female rejection and the nuances of consensual sexual relationships.

Another important finding within this study was the high levels of emotional isolation and depression that the men in the study were experiencing. Men described a dearth of

mentorship and emotional support throughout their lives, and also disclosed difficulties in accessing and utilizing available resources. Isolation and depression were common parts of men's experiences, and were sometimes linked to their use of commercial sex. This finding supports the present research on men's development process within toxic masculinity, which emphasizes toughness and emotional stoicism. In turn, foreclosure on the development of healthy coping strategies and emotional expression is a common outcome of the male socialization process.

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Appendix A
Supplemental Figure 1

Appendix A

Supplemental Figure 1

Informed Consent for Participants

The project has been approved by the Antioch University Seattle institutional review board. You may use this form to decide whether or not you wish to participate in this project.

What is the purpose of this study? To identify themes within masculinity and sexuality. These themes may include men's experience of women, of themselves, and of people in prostitution.

What will happen?

- 1) An initial screening interview. This will include gathering demographic information, and determining eligibility.
- 2) The main interview. This will last between one and a half to 2 hours.

What is the time commitment?

- 1) The total time commitment 3 hours.
 - a. Screening interview – ½ - 1 hr,
 - b. Full interview – 1 ½ - 2 hrs,
- 2) Interviews will take place at a specified location.

What are the possible discomforts or risks?

- 1) Interview topic of gender and sexuality may be triggering. The interview may bring up past memories and experiences that may cause discomfort.
- 2) You may experience being mentally tired after the interview.
- 3) The interview process may illicit questions regarding gender and sexuality. These may not be answered or explored within the limited time frame of the interview.

What are the possible benefits?

- 1) In depth discussion around a seldom discussed issue;
- 2) Increased insight regarding personal experience of gendered experience and sexuality;
- 3) Agency in providing feedback and personal understanding on the topic of male sexual behavior and sexuality.

Will anyone find out that I participated in this study?

Your privacy is important in this research project. Names will not be placed on any paperwork involved in the study. A fake name will be used for any record keeping purposes; with the exception of this consent form, which will be kept in a locked room in a locked cabinet in a separate location. Quotes and personal narratives may be used for the final study; however, all identifying information will be removed.

The researcher is a mandated reporter.

I am required to report any abuse or violence made against a child or vulnerable adult. I am also required to make sure you and others are safe; I will make a report if you tell me you feel suicidal, or plan to kill yourself, or homicidal, plan to kill someone else. This requirement is there to protect people who have a difficult time protecting themselves due to their age or circumstances.

What if I decide that I want to stop or find participating too uncomfortable?

You have the right to end your participation at any point during this study. You will not be subject to penalty nor reprimand for withdrawing at any point in the study. Referrals for therapy can be given at any point in the research process if you feel you need support.

Questions or Concerns?

For questions about this study, or about the participant's rights, contact Adrian Garcia , agarcia3@antioch.edu, or Dr. William Heusler, at wheusler@antioch.edu

I acknowledge that I have fully reviewed and understood the contents of this form. I agree to participate in this study, the topic of which is heteronormative masculinity and the entitlement to sex objects, as evidenced within the sex industry.

I grant permission for the information gathered during my participation to be used by Adrian Garcia for dissertation and any future publication(s).

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

I acknowledge that I the researcher reviewed the contents of this form with the person above, who, in my opinion understood the explanation. I certify that I am the principle researcher responsible for this study and for ensuring that the participant is fully informed in accordance with applicable regulations.

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Figure 1. Informed Consent Form

Appendix B
Supplemental Figure 2

Appendix B
Supplemental Figure 2

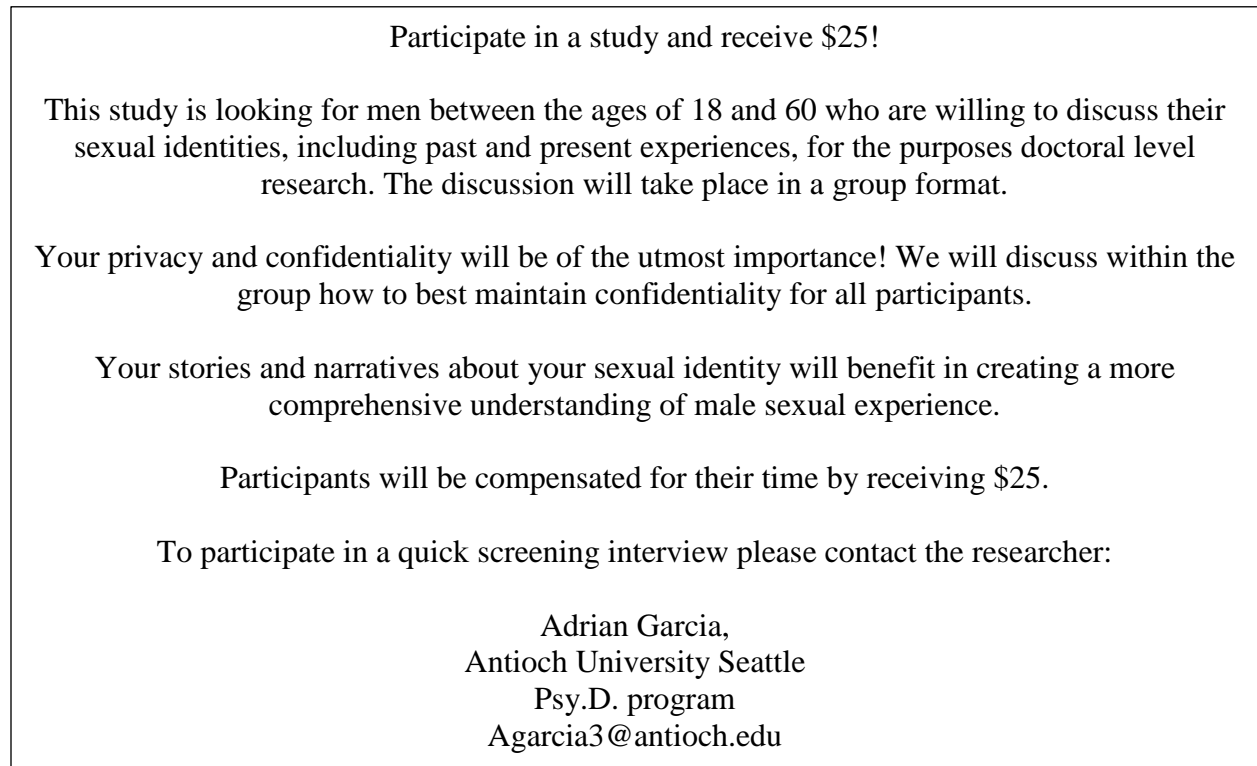


Figure 2. Participant Recruitment Flyer

Appendix C
Supplemental Figure 3

Appendix C
Supplemental Figure 3

Interview Schedule	
1)	What did you learn about being a man when you were a young child?
2)	What did you learn about being a man when you were an adolescent?
3)	Is there anyone who taught you important things about manhood, and what were those things?
4)	What were significant early sexual experiences you had?
5)	Where did you first learn about sex?
6)	Can you tell me a little bit about your sex life now?
7)	What do you remember about encountering pornography when you were younger?
8)	Can you tell me about what your use of porn is like now?
9)	What is your earliest memory of seeing or hearing about prostitution?
10)	What do you recall about your first time paying for sex?
11)	Tell me about your sex buying practices.
12)	What do your early experiences of sex, pornography, and prostitution say about you as a man?
13)	Is there anything important that I have failed to ask you about in this interview that you wish to talk about?

Figure 3. Interview Schedule for Individual Interviews

Appendix D
Supplemental Figure 4

Appendix D
Supplemental Figure 4

Interview Schedule

1. What does belonging look like in the world of men?
2. How does purchasing sex, or pornography, affect your ability to feel a sense of belonging with other men?
3. What were you taught about love when you were a child?
4. How does love relate to sex?
5. How does love relate to buying sex, or pornography?
6. How does love relate to being a man, or being masculine?
7. Before you purchased sex, what were your thoughts about men who bought sex or men who you heard about that were buying sex?
8. What were the things in your life that you back from buying sex during the time prior to your first purchase?
9. What did you learn about the men who buy sex after you started to buy sex? Did your understanding of why men buy sex change when you started buying sex?
10. Did you ever try and stop buying sex? Was it difficult or easy? What happened after you tried to stop?
11. What do women in your life think about porn?

Figure 4. Interview Schedule for Focus Group

Appendix E
Supplemental Figure 5

Appendix E

Supplemental Figure 5

Alliance Community Psychotherapy Clinic	<p>Services: Low income mental health counseling</p> <p>Fees: Sliding Scale</p>	<p>Dependent on location of therapist/ Seattle, WA</p> <p>www.alliancecommunityclinic.org</p> <p>425.656.9627</p>
Antioch Community Counseling & Psychological Clinic	<p>Services: Individual, couples, family, group therapy; art, play therapy; clinical consultation; assessments. Fees: Sliding Scale.</p>	<p>2326 Sixth Ave Seattle, WA 98104</p> <p>www.antiochseattle.edu/community/clinic.html</p> <p>206.268.4840</p>
Bastyr University - Natural Health Clinic	<p>Services: Brief, solution-focused counseling for couples and relationship difficulties, rape and grief/loss issues. Seniors in college provide counseling with supervision. Fees: \$15/hr for co unseling sessions</p>	<p>1307 N 45th St. Ste 200, Seattle, WA 98103</p> <p>www.bastyrcenter.org</p> <p>206.834.4101</p>
Catholic Community Services - Counseling and Mental Health	<p>Services: Counseling for individuals, couples and families</p> <p>Fees: Sliding scale of \$20-\$85 per session depending on services (locations in Seattle, Bellevue, Kent)</p>	<p>875140th Ave NE Suite #205, Bellevue, WA 98005</p> <p>www.ccsww.org</p> <p>206.328.5097</p>
Family Services	<p>Services: Mental health counseling, multicultural counseling & family counseling</p> <p>Fees: Sliding scale</p>	<p>Downtown Seattle, West Seattle, North Seattle & Renton locations. See web site for addresses.</p> <p>206.524.9055</p>
Fremont Community Therapy Project	<p>Services: Therapy for individuals age 16 and older & couples (same sex & heterosexual). Treatment with EMDR for survivors of trauma. Psychological assessment for intellectual and/or emotional functioning.</p> <p>Fees: Dependent upon provider credentials & financial need.</p>	<p>3429 Fremont Place N. Ste 310 Seattle, WA</p> <p>www.therapyproject.com 206.633.2405, x2</p>
Harborview Mental Health Services - Outpatient/Crisis Intervention	<p>Services: Initial mental health assessment; other services may include psychiatric evaluation, psychiatric medications, medication monitoring, case management and referrals. If requested, IBIS may assist families of patients with acute psychiatric problems while the patient is in services. Next day appointments (NDAs, occur one to two business days after the initial screening) are available for adults.</p> <p>Fees: Dependent upon provider credentials & financial need.</p>	<p>401 Broadway, First Floor, Seattle, WA 98122</p> <p>206.744.9699</p>

Northwest Alliance for Psychoanalytic Study	<p>Services: Psychotherapy for individual children, adults, and people with disabilities. Provides only long-term mental health counseling.</p> <p>Fees: Sliding scale fee of \$10-\$60</p>	<p>9709 3rd Ave NE, #209 Northgate Plaza Bldg Seattle, WA 98115</p> <p>www.alliancecommunityclinic.org</p> <p>425.656.9627</p>
Pioneer Human Services - Pioneer Counseling	<p>Services: Comprehensive counseling and chemical dependency services; psychiatric evaluations, medical and medication monitoring</p> <p>Fees: Sliding scale of \$6-\$90</p>	<p>105 14th Ave Suites A and B Seattle, WA 98122</p> <p>206.464.1684</p>
The Psychoanalytic Referral Service (PRS)	<p>Services: Psychoanalytic psychotherapy & psychoanalysis</p> <p>Fees: Some sliding scale fees available</p>	<p>2711 E Madison Stes. 202 & 209 Seattle, WA 98122</p> <p>www.spsi.org/Clinic.aspx</p> <p>206.328.5315</p>
Psychotherapy Cooperative	<p>Services: Serves persons who are in need of psychotherapy but cannot pay rates charged in private practice or through community agencies</p> <p>Fees: Sliding scale</p>	<p>2711 E Madison Seattle, WA 98122</p> <p>www.psychotherapycooperative.org/</p> <p>206.320.7988</p>
Samaritan Center of Puget Sound (The Clinic)	<p>Services: Counseling for individual, couples & families with limited resources</p> <p>Fees: Sliding scale</p>	<p>564 NE Ravenna Seattle, WA 98115</p> <p>www.samaritanps.org/</p> <p>206.527.2266</p>
Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities	<p>Services: Counseling services specializing in serving gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people & counseling for persons with mental illnesses.</p> <p>Fees: \$0 - \$85 per session</p>	<p>1216 Pine St, Suite 300 Seattle, WA 98101</p> <p>206.323.1768</p>

Figure 5. Resources Handout for Participants

Appendix F
Supplemental Figure 6

Appendix F
Supplemental Figure 6.

Demographics Questionnaire

Please write your chosen pseudonym on the following line. Please note that you should choose something other than a nickname as this pseudonym is to protect your identity and to maintain confidentiality.

Age _____

Race/Ethnicity _____

Gender Identity _____

Current Education Level _____

Occupation _____

Sexual Orientation _____

Place of Origin _____

Figure 6. Demographics Questionnaire for Participants

Appendix G
Supplemental Table 1

Appendix G

Supplemental Table 1

Table 7

Example of Coding and Notation

Initial Text	Initial Noting	Developing Emergent Themes	Identifying Connections Across Emergent Themes	Looking for Patterns Across Participants
Interviewer: So it sounds like you were feeling isolated and emotionally strained at that time, with everything that was going on?	I'm curious about his mental health around the time he bought sex.			
Thomas: Oh yeah I was. Like I said, my marriage was the only real thing I had for many, many, years. The only thing I put effort and time into. So when I didn't have that, yeah isolated is a good term. A lot of emotional problems. I've debated with people if suicide means actively going to hurt yourself, or if you don't care whether you live or die, and I've heard people say both. Both can count. So I don't know that I actually had an active plan, but I had definitely reached a point, in that era, of "hey you know, if something happens today that puts me in harm's way, if that's what happens today then it doesn't really matter."	He agrees that isolation was an issue for him at that time.	Social Isolation	Mental Health Concerns Social Isolation	Emotional Lives of Men Mental Health Stressors Isolation
	He was wholly dedicated to his wife during his marriage.	Dedicated Husband Role	Markers of Masculinity Dedicated Husband	Paths to Masculinity Being a Good Provider Becoming a Patriarch
	Was possibly suicidal at the time of his separation	Suicide	Mental Health Concerns Depression with Suicidal Ideation	Emotional Lives of Men Mental Health Stressors Depression
	This sounds a lot like depression maybe.	Depression		

Appendix H
Supplemental Table 2

Appendix H
Supplemental Table 2

Table 8

Sample Characteristics

Characteristic		Total Sample	Percent of Sample
Age		M = 37.91 (SD = 12.65)	
Sexuality			
	Heterosexual	11	92
	Bisexual	1	8
Continent of Origin			
	North America	10	84
	South America	1	8
	Africa	1	8
Ethnicity			
	African-American	3	25
	Hispanic-Native	1	8
	Hispanic	3	25
	Caucasian	5	42
Level of Education			
	GED	1	8
	Some College	3	25
	Associate's Degree	1	8
	Bachelor's Degree	4	33
	Master's Degree	2	17
	Trade School	1	8
Occupation			
	Retired	1	8
	Student and Employed	3	25
	Student	1	8
	IT/Technology	3	25
	Construction	1	8
	Self Employed	1	8
	Business	1	8
	Military	1	8

Appendix I
Supplemental Table 3

Appendix I

Supplemental Table 3

Table 9

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race	Education Level	Occupation	Sexuality	Interview Type
Dave	35	Male	African American	Bachelor's Degree	Self Employed	Heterosexual	Focus Group
Drew	41	Male	Caucasian	Bachelor's Degree	Technology and Entertainment	Bisexual	Focus Group
Hank	37	Male	African American	GED	Construction	Heterosexual	Individual
Jack	32	Male	Hispanic Native	Trade School	Student	Heterosexual	Individual
Lucas	21	Male	Caucasian	Some College	Student and Construction	Heterosexual	Individual
Matt	36	Male	Caucasian	Masters	Military	Heterosexual	Focus Group
Montalvo	30	Male	Hispanic	Graduate	Student and Farmer	Heterosexual	Individual
Riley	45	Male	Caucasian	Some College	Information Technology	Heterosexual	Individual
Thomas	40	Male	Hispanic	Bachelor's Degree	Business	Heterosexual	Individual
Tom	73	Male	Caucasian	Some College	Retired	Heterosexual	Individual
Tommy	35	Male	Hispanic	Associates Degree	Information Technology	Heterosexual	Individual
Will	30	Male	African American	Bachelor's Degree	Student and Truck Driver	Heterosexual	Focus Group